CHRIST IN SOUTH PACIFIC CULTURES

EDITED BY CLIFF WRIGHT AND LESLIE FUGUI

Foreword by Leslie Boseto

CHRIST IN SOUTH PACIFIC CULTURES

Articles by South Pacific Islanders

About the Relationship of Traditional

Culture to Christian Faith

Group Work suggestions

Poems

Edited by Cliff Wright and Leslie Fugui

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F O R E W O R D

When I attended a consultation on Church Unity in Toronto, Canada in 1975 an African theologian said, "We in Africa do not want to be photocopies or appendices of Chist of the West". I took me several days to look deeper into what he meant.

We in the Pacific are in the same category as other so called third world countries to which the western missionaries came to preach an independent, divine message of the Kingdom of God, but contained in their own western cultural boxes. Probably most of our so called first converts were first of all attracted to the new cultural values before being converted!

I continue to believe that Christ must once again be born in the Pacific before the Christian gospel can take deep root. The question which Jesus asked Peter and others, namely, "Who do you say I am?", must be directly answered by the Pacific people. This question is a direct question to our Pacific context and cannot be answered by western theologians for us.

To begin to find answers to the above direct questions the reader is asked to digest what the writers say in this very important book. The question raised by Dr. John Guise, "How deep-rooted is the Christian Faith in our Nation?" must be kept in mind by the reader. He looks for Christian identity which is first of all born, not imposed or merely transplanted from somewhere! Some western theologians may say that there is a pure Gospel that only those (with degrees!) who can afford to speak English, French, Greek and Spanish will be able to learn in USA or Europe!

However, is there any such things as pure Gospel "preserved"? Jesus was born into a particular culture before he was recognised as universal Lord and Messiah. It is only when Jesus is again born in each given cultural context that he is also recognised as universal. Jesus is both local and universal and is both born and risen. It is the time for the Pacific Church leaders, theologians and members to express the reality of Christ in our own local context in order to share with other local contexts the universal touch of His Kingdom's love.

What the writers wrote in this book will help the reader to see that Christ is being born in the Pacific soil, not just transplanted.

There is no culture that can be called universal. Both the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea Governments recognise and acknowledge the place of our individual cultures as indicated in the preambles of the two countries' National Constitutions. They are as follows:

> "We the people of the Solomon Islands, proud of the wisdom and the worthy customs of our ancestors, mindful of our common and diverse heritage and conscious of our common destiny, do now, under the guiding hand of God establish the Sovereign democratic state of Solomon Islands."
>
> "We the people of Papua New Guinea, united in one nation, pay homage to the memory of our ancestors - the source of our strength and origin of our combined heritage, acknowledge the worthy customs and traditional wisdoms of our people - which have come down to us from generation to generation, pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and Christian principles that are ours now."

The underlined words are very important. It is now over due for Pacific Churches to produce in writing what we see, experience and believe are our traditional 'wisdoms and customs'. May I humbly ask everyone who reads this book to begin to search into and understand the reality of our ancestors' spirit-filled wisdoms and worthy customs.

Our indigenous theology emerges from these pages. Let me end this Foreword by quoting what Professor John Mbiti said at a Colloquium held at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, Geneva to discuss the theme of Indigenous Theology and the Universal Church. "In a real sense every form of theology is fundamentally indigenous since it is produced by theologians who are members of a given community that has its roots in a given place and at a given moment in history. Theology starts by being indigenous, otherwise it is not theology at all. For that reason we do not speak about indigenising theology as though it came from outer space and had to be planted in our midst. Yet, for some of us this has been precisely the root of the problem, namely, an attempt to plant theology from one community to another or to universalise what is no more than an indigenous theology."

I am fully in agreement with this statement. I urge every critical, thoughtful and constructive reader and user of

the group work suggestions to press on with producing a Pacific theology which expresses the promised and revealed Good News of the Kingdom of God.

LESLIE BOSETO

Bishop for United Church,
Solomon Islands Region.

THE STORY OF A BOOK.

Cliff Wright and
Leslie Fugui.

This book, written basically by Pacific Island church leaders, is itself a witness to the exciting emergence of Pacific Island Christian churches from the status of "missions" to independent churches. The process has been an encouraging one, associated with the almost complete ending of the Pacific colonial era.

In the 1980's Pacific churches are coming rapidly to maturity, creating their own ways of expressing the universal Christian gospel. Strong local leadership is appearing, less and less dominated by foreign influences.

They have begun the creation of Pacific ways of understanding the Christian faith (Pacific "coconut" theology); worshipping God in a Pacific way (Pacific liturgies); educating in a Pacific way (Pacific general and Christian education), Pacific ways of behaviour both individual and corporate (Pacific personal and corporate ethics). The task is urgent and is far from being complete.

Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, who at the age of 33 was consecrated as the first Bishop of Melanesia (Anglican) on February 24, 1861, was committed to the idea that Christianity is a universal religion, not culture bound. He believed that islanders themselves would and should initiate changes in their traditional customs and culture. He wanted an "internalisation" of Christianity rather than conformity to missionary impositions. His respect for Melanesian languages and culture* was great.

Others in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia had a similar high regard for the traditional cultures, but many did not, and imposed 19th century European culture on the people along with their often limited interpretation of the Christian faith, projecting attitudes of European superiority.

The 1976 statement by John Guise (p. 12) expresses excellently the challenge to internalise the Christian faith among Pacific Island Christians. He spoke of the need to "enter deep down into the people's traditional faith and religious insight, understandings and convictions, and then to begin to build from there, the point at which the people have their inner life and being, the great truths of the Christian gospel".

* See Melanesians and Missionaries, by Darrell L. Whiteman, pp.116-120. William Carey Library, 1983.

Kirition Tauro wrote the following after a culture and faith workshop in Kiribati in 1981 organised by the Kiribati Protestant Church.

> "It will be a great mistake if we do not allow any place for looking at our culture and faith closely so as to find the great contributions they can offer the Christian faith. We should try hard to look for the good things in our traditional culture, and then take what is good and make both of them the means of praising God's name and glory".*

Admittedly there is some resistance to this process, many islanders believing that the ways of expressing the gospel taught by the "ancestor" missionaries was the correct way, and must be strictly observed. Some seem to believe that the Bible is a European book rather than one which came out of the Eastern Mediteranian area from an entirely different ancient culture. It has been suggested that many Pacific Islanders somehow believe that Jesus had a fair skin, blue eyes and spoke either English or French!

Most people in the island communities of the Pacific have a sincere allegiance to the Christian faith and are active members of the churches. For instance, at the time of the 1978 census in Kiribati (Gilbert Islands) the total population was 58,512. Only 21 people did not claim allegiance to a religious group; almost all were Christians. At the same time many of the Christians are involved in an inner tension, "torn between two worlds", still believing in and practising aspects of their traditional beliefs and practices. These beliefs and practices, as is often admitted, are kept "under the mat" in church settings. It is as though in the one head there are two heads, one Christian and one traditional, and in the one heart two hearts with love for both the Christian and the custom ways.

In some respects this can be an advantage if honestly and openly faced. It can lead to unique Pacific ways of believing and acting, for it means that the old cultures have not been destroyed. At least a lessening of the tension seems desirable, with consequent enrichment from both Christian and custom insights.

A series of workshops about culture and faith were held in recent years with financial help from the Australian Council of Churches and support by the Pacific Conference of Churches. The guest resource person was Cliff Wright of the Uniting Church in Australia. The workshops, each lasting two weeks, were held in Samoa (1978), New Britain (1978), Solomon Islands (1978), Vanuatu (1979), Tonga (1979), Kiribati (1981), Tuvalu (1981), Fiji (1983).

These workshops aimed to help members think carefully about traditional beliefs and practices in relation to Christian faith, and to work out ways

* See published report "Christ and Kiribati Culture" by Cliff Wright p.3, available at 4 Fairy Street, Ivanhoe. Vic. 3079. Australia. (A$2.50).

Fiji of course is an exception, where more than half the people are of Indian origin. Only about 2% have become Christians.

through which to understand and affirm the great truths of the Christian gospel in a way intimately related to their own culture. Similar work was also done with students and staff at the Pacific Theological College in Suva, and at Rarongo Theological College in Papua New Guinea.

The basic model was to work with workshop and student participants using small and large group work methods, rather than depending on addresses by experts.

Issues were first identified by those present. The following list was compiled from responses given at various workshops in answer to the question: "What issues arise from traditional beliefs and practices that need attention in relation to Christian faith?"

Sorcery, witchcraft and power of Christ
Causes of sickness and death, healing
Pay-back ("Eye for eye, tooth for tooth") and compensation
Fear of spirits
Cargo - desire for possessions
Sacrifice and reconciliation
Fasting and meditation
Inspiration - songs and dances
Importance of sacred places
Value of confession in avoiding punishment
Betel nut values
Ancestor worship
Meaning of dreams
Traditional spirits and power of Holy Spirit
Magical use of the Bible
Creation stories, the Bible and science
"Messianic" hope
Power of traditional rituals
Rebirth symbols
Traditional and Christian understandings of God
Gifts to gain favour
Use of magic to win women
Initiation and baptism
Death and burial
Leaders and people power - mana
Snake symbolism
Meaning of faith
Rules (taboos) - family, land, justice, etc.
Status of women
Worship and traditional dancing, art forms, singing
Faith - traditional and Christian
Omens
Punishment, judgment and sacrifice
Totems
What causes things to happen?

Spokesmen
Decision making
Legal systems
Traditional and modern education
Sing-sing customs
Sacred shrines
Kinship and land
Marriage and family
Tension old and young
European culture, traditional culture and church practices
Charms
Magical beliefs related to political/economic liberation
Priests - their work
Concepts of time

After identifying issues, the workshop procedure was to choose an issue for concentrated attention using the following as a guide:

1. Describe carefully the traditional belief or practice and its purpose.

2. Make a comparison with Christian understandings asking,

   * What should be retained or revived?

   * What could be "baptised", fulfilled?

   * What should be discarded?

This invariably led workshop members not simply to talk about the need for the development of Pacific theology, worship, and ways of living in community, but to actually attempt such work. Though only a beginning could be made in the time available, the workshop reports indicate the great significance of these attempts.*

Basic to the whole approach was trust in the wisdom and insight of the people attending, trust in the liberating process of the group rather than in experts, and trust in the Holy Spirit to inspire. Much time was given to Bible study and worship.

The service of Holy Communion held at the Aulua Workshop in Vanuatu (see p. 111) illustrates the way in which worship can be enriched when given a cultural expression. The closing service described in the Fiji workshop report is another illustration of such cultural adaptation - certainly not syncretistic.

* Reports have been printed of the workshops in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Some people have expressed a fear that bringing traditional primal beliefs out into the open will lead to their revival, and to the joining together of beliefs that really don't belong together, thus creating a way of thinking, worshipping and acting different from and untrue to both the original primal and Christian systems.

It must be recognised that there is a danger of such syncretism developing, as has happened in Africa and to a lesser extent in Pacific Islands (e.g. The Christian Fellowship Church under Silas Eto in the Solomon Islands).

But it need not happen. We may see the flowering of a more truly Pacific indigenous Christianity, Christian faith which ceases to be "foreign", but is rather a clearer expression of the gospel in language, art forms, symbols, meanings, practical outcomes in the context of the culture. There is a throbbing vital response as people smell the odours of their own soil, hear the language of their own dreams. Darrell Whiteman, in Melanesians and Missionaries (William Carey Library, California 1983) draws a clear distinction between indigenous Christianity and a syncretistic joining together of different cultural forms in a way which distorts the Christian message. (See pp 414-145).

When the Christian analysis of the traditional culture is taken seriously, along with openness to the findings of modern scientific views and issues of political and economic development, the emergence of creative and authentic Christian communities is possible. Christ expressed God's nature and purposes in a particular culture at a particular time. He still needs to be incarnated, living in every culture in every time and place, fulfilling and transforming it. He is not so much brought into the culture as brought forth from the culture.

A major factor in avoiding syncretism as this incarnational work takes place, is that central importance be given to the biblical revelation, and that close touch be kept with the beliefs and practices of the world-wide church.

When the split-level type of situation exists, with primal and Christian beliefs and practices in separate compartments of the minds and hearts of the people, the tension can be quite destructive. It has been found that when the traditional and the Christian are openly and honestly examined, the Bible comes alive, Christian doctrines cease being formal and remote from everyday life. On the contrary the result is clearer insights, liberation, deeper commitment, more profound worship and vigorous action in every realm of life.

There is nothing new in such a process. Right through the history of the Christian church, in various countries and at different times, the Christian faith has been made meaningful and enriched by finding linkages with existing cultures.

For instance, in the first verse of John's gospel we find the writer making a deliberate link between Greek culture and Christian faith. Christ is called the "word", an English translation of the Greek word "logos". To the Greeks this term was very important, designating the divine reason in the universe. When the writer of the gospel used logos to describe Jesus Christ, he gave the familiar term an immensely enriched personal meaning. He presented Christianity as a fulfilment, not a destruction of a central element in the culture of the Greek people. Christ, he said, is the Word of God, through whom all things were made.

There are many similar illustrations in Christian history, closely linked with the missionary task. One example is the creation of the Celtic cross, a cross with a circle imposed on it. Many scholars believe that the circle symbolises the sun, which to the Druids was the symbol of creation. They were sun worshippers. With great boldness and insight, early celtic missionaries provided a link with the prevailing culture - placing the cross over the creation symbol, thus saying that Christ redeems the whole of creation, fulfilling the Druidic cultural belief, baptising it into Christ.*

The articles in this book have in the main been written by Pacific Islanders. The two exceptions are from culture and faith workshop reports which express what was said by islanders at the workshops.

Articles are followed by suggestions for group work. These have been developed by the editors, the articles providing resources for group reflection.

Even though each article is from one particular part of the Pacific, the sessions are designed for adaptation to any local setting. Village, town and country congregations, pupils in secondary schools, university groups, youth groups, women's meetings, theological colleges, conferences, could all find the sessions useful. Some sessions would require more than one meeting to be effective. Preachers could develop sermons from the material in the articles and sessions.

Poems, written by Pacific islanders are included in the book - all but one being written during culture and faith workshops. Meditation on them, privately and in groups could be valuable. This might inspire the writing of more poems and hymns.

* Don Richardson in his book Eternity in Their Hearts (Regal books 1981) gives many illustrations of this process of fulfilment of the old culture in the Christian faith.

The preparation and publication of this book was first suggested at the Culture and Faith workshop held at Auki, Malaita, Solomon Islands, in October 1978, when the following resolution was passed unanimously by workshop members:

> "Recommended that a publication be developed about traditional culture and Christian faith, with a brief introduction, brief chapters on specific issues by indigenous people, and outlines for educational sessions and sermons related to the issues in each chapter. That Cliff Wright be the editor in co-operation with Leslie Fugui."

We are sorry not to have articles written by women, and no article on the place of women in Pacific churches and communities. Women, however, contributed splendidly in the workshops. Women were asked to contribute articles for the book but were unable to respond.

The ecumenical nature of the book, with its contributions coming from various denominations, is a source of deep satisfaction.

Many other specific issues need detailed attention, as a glance at the list of issues identified at workshops (p. 6) makes clear.

It is recognised too, that continuing work needs to be done in the Pacific and elsewhere, relating the Christian gospel not only to traditional cultures, but to scientific world views, the growth of modern technology, and the urgent issues of justice, co-operation, development, peace within and between Pacific nations. But one small book cannot do everything!

At the Auki (Malaita) workshop in the Solomons, one Melanesian member reported a dream he had one night during our time together. He dreamed that he was working with village people in a field. "We were not discussing difficult thoughts, but were bound together by the fellowship of work. Someone came and told us to sort out the white (best) taro from the dark taro. The instruction was to put the best taro in the next field where there was good sunshine, where it would grow well. The dark taro was to be left in the shadow." The interpretation of the dream by the group was clear enough. What was good in the traditional culture must be encouraged and helped to flourish. What is bad should be sorted out, and allowed to wither and die.

This book is aimed at assisting the sorting out process, and at creating truly Pacific churches, with coconut theology, liturgy, and community life, thus enriching the churches themselves and making a contribution to the universal church of our living Lord.

Thanks are due to those who contributed articles, to June Wright who read the material and made many valuable suggestions, to those who did the typing of the first draft in the Uniting Church World Mission office Melbourne, and to all who gave encouragement and support.

LAST WORD FROM THE TONGAN GODS

The Lali is beaten, the Lali is beaten
It is a calling to all Tongans
Please I want you ladies and gentlemen
To be gathered in my presence.

Thank you for your worshipping me
Thank you for your generosity
Thank you for your loving kindness
Thank you for all your sacrifices
I have enjoyed all the feasts
Nothing wrong with our relationship
It may be a different story
But I have to leave you behind.

Tangaloa, Maui, Hikule'o wait a minute
Thank you for the land you provide
Thank you for healing our sicknesses
For protection and your guidance
We know you right from the beginning
Through stones, trees, fish and all creation
But what else can we give
So that you never take your leave.

I smell somebody is coming
He seems to be a Mighty One
He can take all my responsibilities
He loves you more than I do.
I provide you with everything, not my life
He gives you everything, even his life
I know who am I
A messenger of the Mighty One.

I have done all I have to do
It is a waste of time to stay with you
Please hate me as much as you can
So that Christ can be ground of your being
Smiling love, freedom is his blessing
He showers it on you like rain
Please, please, leave me behind
For Jesus is coming to take you with him.

Siosaia Folau.
Tonga.

HOW DEEP-ROOTED IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN OUR NATION?

John Guise

In 1976 Dr. John Guise, then Governor General of Papua New Guinea, at a National Conference of United Church leaders, made the following prophetic statement.

One can perhaps ask the question, "How deep-rooted is the Christian faith in this so-called Christian nation which is also seeking to establish her own identity?" I suggest that the church has a vital and most important part to play. This nation now needs to create her own Christian identity based on valued traditions and ceremonies involved with the whole of human life, such as birth, manhood, womanhood, marriage, death, burial of the dead, fasting after burial, certain signs on the deceased's grave heralding the start of the death feast with pigs and the blood of pigs as the central point of the feast. This ceremony surrounds the belief that it brings peace to the spirit of the deceased and so on and on. All these values have over the ages evolved customs and rituals which correspond with and satisfied that village communities' deepest spiritual needs and aspirations when faced with the great mystery of life and death. The initiations, the feasts, the customary gift exchanges, the death ceremonies, the feasting and burial observances were all part of this life-affirming ritual.

We who are Christians should have the breadth of vision and width of tolerance to recognise the value of such practices and be ready and indeed anxious to take all that is good, and valuable and positive in them and incorporate them into the Christian ritual and liturgy. I am respectfully suggesting that it is only by doing so in this way that the Christian faith can become a rich element soaking through the whole of Papua New Guinea life with its glorious permanent rich colour, rather than that outward and thin coat of paint which could perhaps wash off at the first impact of other great eastern religions if they decide to come into this country.

Greatest Weakness

For example, I would mention such things as the deep belief in the working and the power of sorcerers among the people which the church either hardly seems to recognise or, if it is aware of the persuasiveness of the old beliefs, simply and futilely condemns without attempting to come to terms with the reality of the people's convictions and beliefs.

I would see, as Christians, our greatest weakness is our failure to enter deep down into the people's traditional faith and religious insight, understanding and convictions, and then begin to build from there, the point at which the people have their inner life and being, the great truths of the Christian Gospel. I am sure that the Christian teacher who is not blinded by western idealogy will find in his or her investigation of the traditional

religious life and beliefs of this nation a very large area which, far from being incompatible with the Christian faith, is a rich and fertile ground ready and prepared to receive the Christian religion.

I believe that the church must come to grips with the enduring convictions and beliefs of the people and draw into its ministry those who in our traditional society hold places of high importance and leadership - those with the knowledge of the customary skills associated with healing, gardening, fishing and the like.

Now if this sounds much too revolutionary and radical a programme for us as Christians to embrace, may I remind us all that this, or something very similar, was what the Western church did during its evangelisation of Europe. I believe that there are a great number of Christian festivals, ceremonies, rituals and customs today which originally were heathen and pagan rites in Europe and which the Western church in its wisdom at the time brought in, baptised, sanctified, and turned with new insights and understanding into vehicles and expressions of Christian worship and practice. Surely, I beg, something of the same is possible with our own traditional observances?

Lingering Ghosts

I would like to make another suggestion that we as Christians should make a very strenuous effort to throw off any lingering ghosts of 19th century Christian colonisation and to scrutinise current church attitudes and policies for the last vestiges of the 19th century cultural wrappings in which the gospel was brought to our shores. We must attempt to express and to present the Christian faith in a truly national idiom according to the traditions and the thought-forms and world-view of our own people as I have mentioned.

Highest Vocation

I do not believe that anyone making a fair assessment of the past contribution of the churches to the growth and development of this nation could fail to pay tribute to the great debt we owe to the workers of the Christian gospel and the faith that they brought to us. I am certain that the churches have today, and will continue to have, a vital role to play in the life of our country in holding before our eyes the highest of standards, the widest of visions, the most fulfilling of aspirations, the deepest human affections of love and unity. We look to the church to bring out all that is best, most noble and most worthwhile in our national life and to help us to express as Papuan New Guineans, our faith and worship of an Almighty Providence in a truly national way.

Its in my hope and expectation that the church will rise to its highest vocation and destiny in national life, that I have made my suggestions to you today. Please accept them in the spirit in which they are given - with an earnest and sincere hope that the seed planted by the missionaries in our land in the past may come, in our own time, to a perfect flowering and fruition in our own national expression of our Christian faith. (The Missionary Review, No. 4, December 1976.)

TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

John Pratt

Introduction

In the world there are many Christian churches, and these churches have many differences between them concerning beliefs, doctrines, ways of worship etc. but these Christian churches also have many common grounds of faith, doctrine and beliefs about God.

For example, all of them believe in the same God. All believe that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. All believe that Jesus is the Son of God. All believe that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. All believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the world.

The same applied to the traditional religions of our forefathers. They had many different religions and differences in faith and beliefs; they even worshipped different gods but they had many common grounds for their faith.

For example, all believed that there was a god or gods to be worshipped. All believed that human power was limited, therefore people needed a higher power than their own, so that they could manage to fight against the other higher powers which without help could not be overcome. All believed in the need for someone on whom to depend, and that is a god or gods.

Now, what we should do is to try and find some common ground between Christian understanding of our God, and our traditional understanding of the gods our forefathers believed in and worshipped.

In this article I will list some of the basic understandings of both sides and try to relate them so that we can see where our Christian faith can connect with our traditional faith and understanding of the gods of our forefathers.

I. God is a living God who acts, sees, moves, listens, and so on

Even though our ancestors worshipped dead things like wood and stone yet they believed that these dead objects had active powers associated with them. They did not worship things or spirits which could not respond to their communication and to their needs. They believed that their gods were living gods, and could speak to them through certain actions, movements and voices. They did not actually hear their voices with their physical ears, but they believed that their gods answered their prayers in certain ways with either yes, no, or wait. We Christians also believe

that God answers our prayers with either yes, no, or wait, in many ways just like our ancestors.

Our ancestors believed that their gods could act for their protection when they went fighting. They believed that their gods went with them in war. Even if they were wooden gods which could not move, and even if they could not see their gods with their physical eyes, they believed that the spirit of power of their gods went with them and they could feel their presence with them. The wooden and stone idols of our forefathers (visible objects) were only the symbols of the invisible being whom they worshipped. We Christians also have symbols to help our faith in the invisible God whom we worship, (for example, the bread and wine for Holy Communion).

This is very much like our Christian understanding of God today. When we believe that God is with us, we do not mean that we can see him with our physical eyes, but that we can feel his presence, and by faith we know that he is always present with us. Our forefathers lived by faith, and so do we Christians today.

II. God can see and know our future, and he knows all secrets

In Roviana, our ancestors believed in a spirit called "Liqomo". When they went out for head-hunting raids, they took this Liqomo with them, so that he could show them, or let them know or feel the position of their enemies without actually seeing them with their own eyes.

If they wanted to know any secret or hidden thing or about enemies, they used to ask Liqomo. They believed that there was a power beyond human power who could let them know the secrets.

They also had spirits whom they could ask to reveal to them future events. When asking these spirits, they acted in certain ways, and with certain movements, for example by swinging their right arms around. Or if they were in a canoe, one person might ask certain questions of the spirit, and when the canoe was rocking, they know what it meant to them. Here we see that our ancestors had the belief that there is one god or spirit with the power to know the future; his power was beyond human power. All they had to do was to trust him in faith and seek help from him.

We Christians believe also that our God knows all secrets and he knows our future. Nothing is hidden from his eyes. In him there are no secrets.

This again is another common ground of faith. Both Christians and our ancestors believe that in God there is nothing that we can hide from his eyes. This belief also is not strange to our people.

III. God's power is beyond human power, and trustworthy.

One of the main beliefs of our ancestors' religion was that they knew the human limitations of their power. They also believed that their gods had the power which is beyond human power and knowledge. They knew that they could not fight the evil forces againstthem, whether they were physical, mental or spiritual. They needed someone who had a power which could not be defeated by human power, so that they could depend on him.

There were so many things they could not do by their own strength, power and knowledge. Therefore they looked for a power outside their own human power.

Some of them found this power within certain trees, some in certain spirits, some with certain animals, some with certain stones, and so on.

When they found that the power they were looking for was available within one of these things, they started to worship it and treat it as their god. Their main purpose in worshipping these objects (material things) was not to treat the object itself as a god, but the power that was shown through a particular object such as a stone. If they could not find any power within that object they would not have worshipped it at all, because they did not find any help in it. Only if they found power and help from that particular thing would they worship it.

The object, spirit or animal they worshipped did not matter much. The main thing is that they found the power they were looking for which could protect them, help them in fishing, making their gardens fruitful, and so on.

They knew for sure that their human power was limited, therefore they trusted these spiritual powers for help. Christians too know that our power is limited. We know our need for power beyond ourselves: we believe the god whom Jesus made known is powerful and trustworthy. Therefore the belief that his power is beyond human power and knowledge is not strange to our people in Melanesian countries and in the whole of the Pacific, I should say.

IV. God is our Father who loves us and cares for us in a father/son relationship

Some of our ancestors venerated and trusted the spirits of their forefathers. In this kind of veneration there was a father/son relationship continuing after death. Death did not end it. The relationship was not a master/slave (or servant) relationship but a father/son (or parent/child) relationship.

The children and grandchildren worshipped the spirits of their ancestors,believing that their ancestors' spirits were still alive

and living with them even though they could not be seen with their physical eyes. They believed that the love and care of their ancestors still continued after physical death. When their ancestors were alive they had been treated just as human fathers. But after death they were treated as more than fathers, but like gods. They believed that the spirits of their ancestors went with them when hunting, fishing, fighting, gardening, etc.

This faith gave them comfort and release from their fears because they believed that their father was still with them to help them.

Application to Christian faith

1. We Christians believe that death (physical death) does not end our father/child relationship with God, which has links with our ancestors' faith. The relationship continues even after their death.

2. The continuing presence of our Father God gives us comfort and drives away fears. So it was with our ancestors' faith in the spirit of their ancestors.

3. We Christians would not speak evil aginst our Father in Heaven because we love him, respect and honour him. This has links with traditional beliefs which gave love, respect and honour to the spirits of their fathers.

4. We love God our Father because he first loved us. Melanesian people do not find this hard to believe, because of their traditional belief that after death the spirits of beloved ancesotrs do not cease to care for them.

These are some common grounds of our Christian faith and our ancestors' faith. Therefore our father/child relationship to our Christian God is not strange to our people in the Pacific.

V. Our God is holy, and should be honoured and respected

One of the beliefs of our ancestors is that the gods whom they worshipped were holy, and they took this seriously. The respect our forefathers offered to their gods was greater than that which we offer to our God today. They were so full of faith and respect and honour to their gods that when they approached them, they almost walked on their knees.

They called their priests "holy men" because they were so devoted to their holy gods. Priests were set aside for offering sacrifices on behalf of their people, just as the Old Testament priests did for their people.

They would never speak dirty words against their gods.

Many Christians in the Pacific have lost this strong faith, therefore our faith and trust in our God today is very weak in many of our congregations.

Often today we approach our God with pride; our ancestors would not do that. When they approached their altars, they were full of fear and honour. This fear took away the pride from their hearts.

We may say that fear in the sense of fright is not good, because as Christians we need not approach our God with fear, but with joy, love and faith. But fear in the sense of respect and honour keeps us humble, and that was partly what happened to our ancestors.

We believe that our God is holy, so we must be holy.
"Be ye holy for I am holy."
Our ancestors also believed that their priests were holy because their gods were holy. This belief in the "holiness of God" is therefore also not strange to our people in the Pacific.

VI. Our God is a God of revelation

Our biblical understanding of God is that he is a God of revelation, meaning that God revealed himself to man, rather than man discovering him. He spoke through the prophets, but above all, he made himself known through Jesus Christ.

Many of our ancestors believed that their gods revealed themselves to their priests and to certain of their magicians through dreams, certain voices or sounds, some kinds of physical appearances, and some certain magic actions. Their gods were gods of revelation rather than being discovered by man.

In the Old Testament, and in the New Testament, we read that God revealed himself to people through similar ways and means. Therefore when the Christian faith came and this teaching of the God of revelation was taught, it was not a strange idea to our people.

VII. We Christians believe that our God is everywhere, and cannot be bound by time, space or place, because he is Spirit

Many of our ancestors believed that their gods could follow them everywhere they went, and they believed that there were spirits associated with the material things they worshipped.

As has been suggested above, a stone they worshipped was not the main thing. What was important was the spirit associated with it, which could not be bound by time or place. That spirit was a free spirit and could move at any time to any place, and

also be present everywhere, even though the stone associated with the spirit had a fixed place where it stayed immovable. That stone is only a special dwelling-place of the spirit they worshipped, like an altar in our church buildings today. Some of us Christians today give more respect to the church building (especially the main altar) than to the God whom we should worship.

The same sort of thing happened to our ancestors. Many of them treated the stone or tree as the god, instead of the spirit which was associated with that stone or tree.

To many Christians today, the church building is a god. The church buildings and the stone images or sacred tree are not everywhere, and they are bound to a particular place. But the God in whom we Christians believe, and the spirits in which our ancestors believed, are not bound by time, place or space. This belief is a common bond between Christians and our ancestors.

VIII. God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and everything therein

We Christians believe that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, all that we can see, as well as the unseen things. This belief comes throughout the Bible, beginning with the book of Genesis.

Some of our ancestors believed that their god was the creator of their world in which they lived.

For example, Higalozi, the chief god of Kolombangara Island in the Western Solomons was believed to be the creator of Kolombangara and some other islands in the Western Solomons near Kolombangara.

There are other stories similar to this Higalozi story.

There are gods which our ancestors believed to be the creators of certain reefs, mountains, stones. By their words, things happened. Therefore to some of the islands in the Pacific, the belief of our God as Creator is not strange.

IX. Life after death

We Christians believe in a life after physical death. The Bible tells us clearly about it. Jesus promised many rooms in his Father's house for those who follow him, so we Christians believe that physical death does not mean the end of our life. (John 14: 1-4)

Many people in the Western Solomons believed in a place of the spirits of the dead. The name of the place is "Sodo". It is believed to be somewhere in and around Bougainville and Shortlands but no-one can pinpoint the actual place. Some stories say that some people saw the place, with its fire, smoke, gardens, and so on, but could not see anyone there. Whether this is true

or not, I don't know. The main thing is that our people had in their faith and religion a place for the spirits of the dead.

This again is a common ground with the Christian faith where we have hope for life eternal. Both Christians and our ancestors believe that the life after death is eternal life and no death or sorrow there.

X. God forgives our sins if we confess them and ask him for forgiveness

We Christians believe that our God is a forgiving God. He can cleanse our hearts from all the uncleanness that is in us if we confess to him and ask him to forgive us.

Our ancestors had a similar kind of belief. In Roviana, for example, the priest (Hiama) had the duty of bringing puddings, fish or meat (pig) to the altar when anyone in the community had committed adultery or done other wrongs. He offered the sacrifice with confession, and asked their god for cleansing on behalf of the one who had done wrong. After the sacrifice they believed the wrong-doer was forgiven and made clean.

There is some common ground here between our ancestor's faith and Christianity, for at the Holy Comminion service we make confession of our sins and remember Christ's sacrifce for us. We receive forgiveness, cleansing, new life.

In many ways, our Christian faith is very different from our ancestor's faith, but the points I have written about in this paper are some of the areas where our Christian faith has close links with our ancestors' religion and faith.

Not every traditional religion in the Pacific is in accordance with what I have put down here, and also, not every Christian can see things as I see them, but this paper is to help us in some ways to compare the two religions and try to see how we can relate them.

Questions to think about

1. If our ancestors were lost because they worshipped wrong gods, and if it means that they are not saved, then who is going to be blamed for their lost souls?

2. If we say that they (some of them) have been saved because they are judged according to their own faith and religion, why does the gospel need to be preached to them?

Some Bible references to help us

Genesis 1 and 2 - Creation stories

Exodus 3 - "God is a living person" e.g. v.14, "I am that I am".

Revelation 4 - God is holy and lives for ever - worthy to be worshipped.

John 3:16; John 15:12-17; 1 John 4:16 - God loves us.

John 1:1-18 - God revealed himself in human form.

1 Chronicles 29:11 - God's power and greatness.

Psalm 145:4 - God's power and greatness.

Psalm 139 - God is everywhere and no secret can be hidden from him.

John 14:1-11; 1 Corinthians:15 - Life after death.

Mark 11:25-26; Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17 - God forgives sins.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF GOD

Step 1: Ask people to reflect on the question:
How do you think about, believe about God and how he acts in the world? To do this, give time for people to sit quietly for a few minutes, then share with their neighbours, without breaking into groups.

Step 2: Present the following skit. Copies should be available for each character in the skit. The people to take part should be chosen before the session begins and have an opportunity for a brief rehearsal.

Deacon: I don't think there was much value in the old religion, in the old ways of believing about God, Christianity has the answers we need. It seems dangerous to me to pay attention to past beliefs and practices. Gradually the old beliefs will die, and so they should.

Minister: Oh, I don't quite agree. Surely God was at work among our people before the arrival of the missionaries. People knew something about him then. Anyway, many of the old beliefs continue among the people . We should talk about them openly. Didn't our ancestors believe in a creator god?

Married Woman: I don't want to go back to the old days, even though God may have been at work here then. Do you think the God of the Bible was responsible for our creation stories?

Minister: God is revealed in the Bible, the creator of everything. That must have included our land and people.

Deacon: It would be good to know more about the way our ancestors thought about God, what has been changed, what has been added, what aught to be thrown away.

Married Woman: I would be interested to know more about that, and how God is at work among us now, not only in the Bible days, but in the modern world.

Step 3: Divide the gathering into small groups to examine the following questions:

(a) What did the people believe about god before the arrival of the missionaries?

(b) What difference does belief in Christ as God's revelation make in our understanding of God? (see John 1:1-18)

(c) Someone has said, "Every true discovery of science about the world and people tells us more about God." Discuss this statement. What effect should modern scientific discoveries have on our beliefs about God?

Step 4: List in two columns the reports from groups making clear the similarites and differences in beliefs.

Traditional gods	Christian God

Step 5: Consider the question: What further work on this issue is needed? How could it be carried out with children, young people, adults?

Resources

John Pratt's article; the poem by Siosai Tolou - (p.11) "Last Words from the Tongan Gods"; Genesis 1; Psalm 8; John 1:1-18.

CUSTOM IS CALLING

My dear People! The New Hebrideans
Where are you going?
Which way are you going?
I'm sad that you are turning away;
Turning and know no way.
What is worth studying!
So Please! Please! Please!
I sob for you! And wish that you learn from me!
I'm inviting you!
You! You! You! My New Hebrideans
To think carefully about me!
To think carefully about your beliefs about me!
To think carefully about your practices towards me!
Then; One more step along the world you go.
Go! To share the truth of the Gospel
Me, In relation to the Christian Faith.
I'm neither wrong, nor bad
But you are wrong and bad
You use me wrong - and say I am wrong.
But I remain as I'm put in the world
I did not exist by myself
That you should use me for your own self
I was put here!
To help you here!
To see reality very clearly!
Learn from me, what is right and true.
When you see the proud people of today
You would think of me! And my days.
Days of old which knew respect
Respect of the Nakamal!
Nakamal of the Men!
Respect of the little grassy hut!
Hut of the women!
Respect of the place of circumcision!
A place of the young men!
Respect of the swimming place
Place of the young pretty girls
Who swim without spell!
I'm calling you! I'm inviting you!
You! You! You! My New Hebrideans!
To look at the ways you now neglect
To look, to think, to study, to relate!
I'm calling you! I'm inviting you!
You my New Hebrideans,
Not the Europeans,
Respect! Respect! Respect! Shout the Pastor
Respect! Respect! Respect! Shout the Elder
Respect! Respect! Respect! Shout the Christian!
But I said quietly, you can also learn from me.

...by Fiama Rakau
Vanuatu

A TRULY NOBLE DEATH

Death and Dying

Bernard Narokobi

Death in Melanesia is something very dramatic as well as very common place. Melanesians have a love-hate-fear relationship with death. But they accept it as something real and eternal. Children see, touch and feel death just as much as adults. Death is not hidden, nor is it kept away from the young and tender of years. Death conquers everyone, rich or poor, saintly or satanic, black or white. Yes, death is as real yesterday, as it is to-day and forever. Even the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, fell victim to death.

Melanesians fear death. It is not so much the act of death that they fear, but the inner world's life that follows death. What happens to people when they die? Some are buried, some are smoked, some are placed on high stools, while others are burned or are allowed to rot unattended amidst the vastness of nature. The coldness, the stillness and the immovability of a dead body is as awe-inspiring as it is deadly cold. To see the body of a loved one, once loving, active, awake, warmth-giving and responsive, lying still and motionless, is to enter the gates of mystery.

Between a useless, lifeless body and the soul world, stands the sorrowful man. Although I had seen many dead and buried many dead, I had never actually experienced the mystery of death until recently.

My beloved mother had suffered from terrible asthmatic attacks for some time. In the past few years, she had grown very weak and thin, almost the shape of a vine. In spite of that physical and bodily weakness, she was a mountain of energy, a rock of courage, wit and love and hope.

In the last two years of her life, she spent, on the average, two weeks every month in hospital, or in bed. Each time, she would come out stronger in spirit, but weaker in body. Untiring in her labour, she made many gardens and produced more yams, taro, bananas and vegetables than is needed to feed a whole tribe. People came from far and wide to get food and seedlings from her.

For years, we presumed her presence, never once believing that this rock would evantually fall. For years, she stood like a tall, towering and majestic tree on a mountain top. Assuming her eternal presence, I never once thought that even a majestic tree that never seems to have a beginning and an end would eventually wither and die, or that its roots would be unearthed.

That was my mother, my beloved mother. For three weeks we agonized over her, as she stood between the gate of eternity and of life.

Her youngest child Camillus, and his wife Cathy, came to see her. They wept for her and left. Her nephew, Andrew, the image of her beloved brother Yauieb who had long gone to paradise, came and saw her. He bathed her with water and tears and left her. He knew, and she knew, that until the angels call them to unity, they were parting forever. He cried, she rejoiced calmly - 'It is all right. I thought my brother, Yauieb was dead. But in you, he lives.'

Her daughters, Veronica, Apolonia, Carolline, Balunai, Wanis and all her grandchildren came to see her. Each day, for three long and agonizing weeks, they came to see her. All the village people came to see her. Somehow, everybody knew she would not live. She herself knew she would not live.

Her nephew Matthew Rahiria came, day by day, to check on his makik (aunt) with his wife Dorothy, bringing food, money and drinks. For three weeks she lay in bed, talking, laughing, crying, agonizing. She was towing between life and eternity. One part of her wanted to live. Her body was weak, but she was still strong. Her heart and lungs were gone, but her spirit struggled.

When she saw her grandchildren, Vergil, Daniel, Anaiola, Emanuel, Robin, Ignas, Alphonsa, Hildegard, Sigistus, Justine and George, she would sit up, see her hands and say - 'Oh my beloved grand-children. These are the hands. If only I am stronger, I would grow more yams and bananas for you.' Then she would lie down again, close her eyes and agonize.

Each day I would visit her, sometimes three times a day, sometimes more. Half of me knew she would not live, but the other half of me refused to accept that she must die. I pleaded with her, prayed with her, prayed with all my friends, begging God not to take her away. She too, in her first week of suffering, begged God not to take her. But in the second and the third weeks, she had accepted death.

In the third week, I visited her and we prayed. But my mother Maria had already accepted her new life. She was angry with me, almost to the point of violence. She commanded me to be gone - just as our Lord had commanded Peter to 'be away with you Satan'. Once she told me in my face, in the presence of my father, Anton and my eldest sister Veronica 'Why do you keep praying for me, to hold me back? I can't breast feed you any longer. You are already grown up. I must go'.

This came as a great shock and a surprise to me. For days, I wondered why my own mother would say such cruel things to me. She was truly torn. She wanted to live, but years of suffering, asthma, weak heart, weak lungs had completely broken her body.

She had accepted the inevitable, but not me. I wanted her to live, at least for another ten years.

My father too, saw her death as inevitable. He begged me to take her home to die. I consulted the doctor who advised that he thought there was a chance she could pull through but that if we wanted to take her home, he would arrange for her to take heart medicines. Hoping against hope, and refusing to accept defeat in death, I refused to take her home.

For three weeks, she refused to eat. She would often say - 'My body is not hungry'. Her food was water. She drank a lot of water and bathed and bathed in cool water. That water! She virtually lived in it and would often ask us to wet a towel and wash her body with it. Though simple, water is rich and beautiful, it purifies. She was in fact purifying her body, making it ready for the Lord.

Though her death left us with broken hearts, and shattered memories, it was the happiest and the most noble death I have yet experienced. She had suffered a long time. She kept asking why she had to undergo so much pain when in her conscience she had not done a wrong. She would say again and again to us - 'I have never wronged anyone. Why do I have to suffer so long?' Then she would tell us of her own mother's death. Her mother cooked bananas for her and her grand-daughter, kissed them and died peacefully.

Again, we would comfort her and tell her she was a great mother, not just to us, but to 'all who passed by her way', as the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Mr. Somare put it in his telegram of condolence to our family. We would tell her - 'Mother, you are suffering for our sake. Sorry we have wronged you so often.' We would remind her that our Lord was faultless, and yet he endured immense and intense suffering, for our sake.

As each day went by and her condition did not improve, we were sure this was her last time with us. Over the last six years, she had come close to death. Two or three times she collapsed over that period, but came back to life. In that time, she was alone in the village. Once, as she was walking home from her garden, she fainted and lay unconscious until a village lady found her and helped her home.

Each time we prayed, and the good Lord spared her for us. Each timo she would go to the hospital at Dagua or in Wewak and again she would be well again. Once I was in Japan when she was critically ill. I prayed and begged God not to take her home. He spared her life. Another time I went home and saw her on her bed, almost dead. We prayed over her and she was well again.

She had seen the other side of death before,and was not frightened. Once she told me of what she saw when she was dead. She saw herself enter some unspeakable place, full of brightness that dazzled her. At that time, I thought she was telling me a fairy tale. Much later I learned from written literature that the phenomenon she was explaining was quite universal. From her experience of death, she was happy to go.

All her clan brothers except one, and her only sister, Naisumon, died very young. Her only brother Moses Yauieb, died in Rabaul, at the age of 45 in 1959. Ever since that day, she had often wept and wept for him. She did not see him die and she did not bury him. She often told me how she wanted to die so that she could see her brothers again. When two of her eldest daughters' husbands died at about the ages of 35 to 45, she was again broken. But in a strange way, the loss of her sons-in-law gave her added strength to work hard and bring up her grandchildren.

This she succeeded in doing by planting taro, banana and yam gardens and supplying food to her grandchildren. She went beyond that. She would sell coffee, cocoa, make money and buy clothes and trade-store food for her grandchildren. Each Saturday, sometimes even when she had severe attacks of asthma, she would still go to the Dagua Market in Wewak and sell her produce. With the money she made, she would buy bread, meat, salt, kerosene, fish and clothes for the children.

Our beloved mother never wanted anything for herself. But she wanted everything good for everybody. Everyone was her child. Teachers who came from far and wide in Papua New Guinea to teach at Banak Community School knew her. She loved them, gave them food and accepted them as her children. They responded generously by giving her food, clothes and money. She fed the grandchildren with it. This was her quiet, unheard, but dynamic contribution to the Melanesian spirit of sharing and love, to the spirit of unity and friendship.

Missionaries were her special friends. Priests, brothers and sisters who came her way knew her. She would meet them and offer them pawpaw, bananas, pineapples and fruits. That was all she had to give, but that was plenty.

The missionaries responded generously and would give her sugar, salt, newspaper for smoking and the like. Maria, our mother spent several years in the convent at Boikin. She protested to the white sisters at the obvious injustice whereby the white sisters would eat fresh meat and fish and give to the Melanesian girls only bones and tissues. She left the convent. She was quite illiterate, but was intelligent and quick as a scholar and a genius.

Many friends visited her. Fr. Cherubim Dambui left his office to visit her and encourage her to live. He showed her the rosary she had exchanged with him. He saw her strength and refused, like me, to believe she would die. Fr. Liebert visited her many times and she confided in him, telling him she was ready to die. then came her long-standing friend, Fr. William Kemmerling. He had come from Bogia to celebrate his 50th anniversary as an ordained priest. He had been our parish priest for many years and she and my father served as the first catechists.

When she saw him she leapt out of her bed and embraced him. She exclaimed - 'Oh father, I thought you were dead.' He too was joyous and replied - 'I also thought you were dead.' She accepted extreme unction. Among us Catholics, that was it. Either she would live or she would die.

Again, I hoped against hope and prayed for her survival. Although she was very alert, she had already crossed the threshhold. A day before she was to die, I took her in the wheel chair and wheeled her to the hospital verandah, where she looked out into the sea, into the sky and beyond.

I stood by her. For me, it was only ten minutes that we were alone. But she thought it was eternity. A fresh breeze blew across the bay from Moem Beach where we often went with her grandchildren for picnics. She felt the breeze blow into her nostrils, her whole body, and remarked - 'Giha, yopuni whim' ('Beloved beautiful breeze'). She was tired and told me - 'Enough, let us go.' Slowly I wheeled her back to her bed.

Then she cried, almost like a child. She called her father and she called her mother. She called her brother. Her repeated cry was - 'Let me die, let me die.' Once she begged to be shot, for the pain in her was almost too great to bear. But her weeping was always very gentle, and without excitement. That was my mother, part of my very being. But she was also another person, almost a stranger.

She wanted us to have courage, and not to be afraid. Her beloved husband, my father was beside her in all suffering. He slept on the floor beside her, night after night, in the hospital. Every morning I would visit them. Some days he was at the point of total despair. He knew she had lost hope. But I kept him hoping, against hope. Looking back, perhaps I was cruel and unkind. But what loving son would want his mother to die?

By the third week, I had to tell my mother: 'I've done my best, mama. There's nothing more I can do. The doctor says you are on the best medicine there is. If you keep taking the medicine, there is a chance you will live.' She was not taking the medicine.

Her iron will refused the medicine, just as in the past she had refused to die. She was now living on drops of water. She was amazingly strong and would talk as if she was not sick.

She was actually improving, but still refused to eat. The doctor put her on saline water. Her arm quickly swelled and so did her legs. She asked that the saline water be removed. She was now living on the Lord's breath.

I went to the hospital and explained to my mother my dilemma. 'Mama', I said, 'I want to thank you for everything you have done for me. You have been a great mother; and I am proud of you.' She watched me with her eyes, lying on a soft mattress and a beautiful New Mexican bedcover I had bought her, the former in Wewak and the latter in New Mexico, America. I continued 'Mama! The people of New Hebrides want me to go and help them with their constitution. They will be independent. There is nothing more I can do for you. I think it is the Lord's call. If you die while I am away, that is all right. Papa, my sisters, my brother and the village people can bury you. I will come and mourn over the grave.'

She replied, almost as soon as I stopped. 'You can go. Don't worry about me. I am not going to grow up again. When a coconut palm reaches maturity, all it can expect is death. You are not a child anymore. Have courage.' She closed her eyes. My father looked at me with tears in his eyes and said: 'I am the first Catholic of our area. Death is good. She will be in heaven with God our Father. You can go.'

When I visited mama in the morning, she was critically ill. Still on the drip. Her mouth had developed ulcers, her legs swelled and she refused to drink water. Noting her condition, I hesitated about going to Bagi. At twelve noon, again I visited her. At that stage, she was still talking. She told me she wanted to go home. I told her I would take her home at three o'clock that afternoon. Apparently, fearing death for the first time, as it was very near, she replied :- 'No, I am afraid of cold. Perhaps tomorrow morning.'

I returned to the office and continued working. At exactly three o'clock, my wife Regina, who was nursing in the same ward telephoned me. 'Mama is not well. She is on oxygen.' My God! I knew that was to be the end. I ran to my car and informed my sisters and their husbands and went to the hospital. My eldest sister, Veronica, told me she had taken mama to wash her and she had collapsed in the bathroom. Immediately, I went to see the doctor. He came and saw her and told us she would live only a few hours.

Mama was in complete control of herself. She was receiving oxygen and breathing deeply. Her eyes were open and sharp. I stood by her. I was not afraid, but deeply sad. She made signs with her hands for

the removal of the oxygen. When they were slow to remove it, she forced words out of her mouth - 'Get rid of that thing.' In her dying moments, she had said something to my eldest sister and my father. They wanted her to repeat these words. They asked her to do so and she spoke - 'X (naming the person) broke my daka (Mustard seed) and bewitched me.' So there she was, dying. Rightly or wrongly, in the depths of her consciousness she believed she was dying of sorcery. That came to me as a great shock, but I accepted it as part of the process of dying in Melanesia.

No one cried. No one panicked. Oxygen was removed and we took her to the car. My father sat on one side and my oldest sister on the other side and mama was laid down on her mattress in between. She was conscious, but her head was very slack and it hung loose. We drove past our homes and told her of the places we were passing. At the Windjammer Beach motel, I stopped the car and cashed a cheque. When I returned she rebuked me and said - 'Why are you wasting my time? I want to go home.' I apologized and explained.

At Mrs. Cheong's trade store, we stopped. Mrs. Cheong was my mother's very close friend. Mama would bring Mrs. Cheong garden vegetables, chillies and she would reciprocate with money, trade-store food and the like. I informed Mrs. Cheong that mama was in the car outside, critically ill, and we were taking her home. When she heard this she came out and saw my mother.

Dad told mama her friend was outside to see her. She raised her head and offered her hand which Mrs. Cheong took and shook. Mama told her 'I am dying. Papa will bring your chillies in for you.' Neither Mrs. Cheong nor I believed then that in a matter of less than three hours, mama would be gone. Nevertheless, Mrs. Cheong went into her trade store and gave mama blouses, two cases of tinned fish, tobacco, cigarettes, and many more presents. My car could not take all the gifts.

We drove on to the village. At Yarapos Catholic Girls' High School we stopped. One of mama's granddaughters was a nun there. She came out and mama farewelled her. Our next stop was after we crossed Hawain bridge. My car was getting very hot, as its water pump was leaking. In fact, my car had been in the garage for a week and I had just taken it out the same day. I had no money, and mama gave me twenty kina, her copra and cocoa dividend money, to pay for the repairs and registration.

We stopped and I drained the radiator and refilled it. The villagers came out and we told them. They expressed their sympathies, gave us some betelnuts to chew. We were there a while. Mama felt cold again and rebuked me - 'What are you doing, wasting my time. Take me home.' Those were to be her last words.

We went past Boikin Catholic Mission Station, where mama spent her youthful years and later as the wife of our first catechist and mother to many young Catholics. We told her we were passing through Boikin and she murmured. Again we passed through Karanap Plantation, Kopi Village and Banak Church where she often went to worship.

Passing through Banak we turned left into the school and to Boronugoro. Oh Boronugoro! That was her home. She had spent many years there, labouring, day and night.

It was from that home at Boronugoro that our family drew strength and grew up. Our family lived on a narrow ridge - a small paradise, with coconuts and cocoa all around us. Mama and papa spent twenty years there planting coconuts and cocoa. The land owner had initially permitted the family to stay on the land and work it. But when he saw how well the coconuts and cocoa had grown he resented our presence. With his sister, they forced us off that land. Undoubtedly the sorrow and even anger in my mother's heart over the land, the cocoa trees and the coconuts, had broken her body, her spirit and finally her heart, and killed her.

We drove through that land and for a short while I stopped the engine. We did not speak, but knew among ourselves what was in our hearts. At the end of that piece of land, papa asked to be dropped. I dropped him. He walked through places he had walked with mama. He saw the secondary growth of gardens they had made. He saw coconuts he had dug holes for and she had planted. These tall towering coconuts stood forty feet above him.

He saw and felt a great forty years' partnership coming to an end. But more than that, he saw his own children - the coconuts and cocoa he and mama had planted, standing in loveliness and isolation. And so did I. I felt and heard the coconuts weep, cocoa trees mourn and banana trees cry. Mama was farewelling all these things. We told her we were going over the earth she walked a thousand times, earth she had toiled over for our sakes.

Our village was half a mile away, as we had actually left Boronugoro when mama became too sick and the land owner was always cross. Papa decided to go and tell his daughter, Apolonia who was living on another ridge. It was about 6.30 p.m. I discouraged papa, saying we would send some children later. But nothing could stop him. He wanted to walk over their footsteps for the last time and feel their parting partnership.

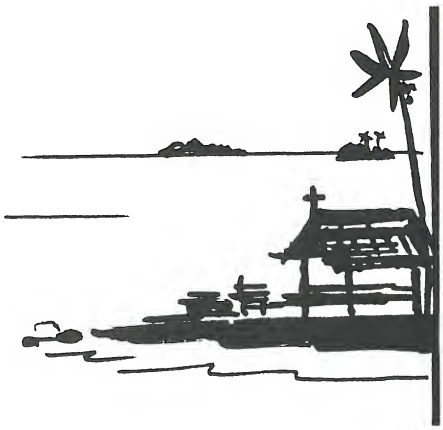
We drove on, past the last garden she had made on a hillside overlooking the road. I told her we were passing by the garden. Banana trees, pawpaw trees, taro and everything in the garden seemed to greet us. As we drove past the place was solemn, but the leaves

waved their goodbyes. Within five minutes we were home.

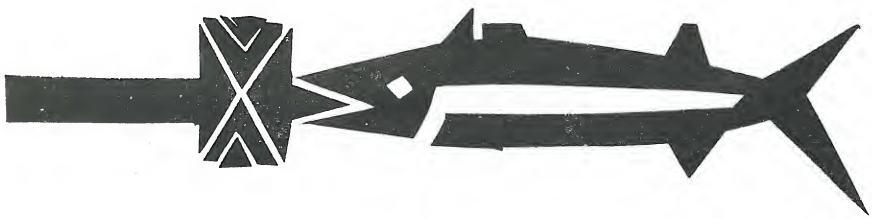
I stopped the car and carried mama to her house. Just as I lifted her onto my shoulders, she grasped my neck tightly, so tightly I thought she was going to choke me. I called her, but there was no response. She held tightly onto me. Dad has two houses in the village. He had built a new house for my brother and I. He and mama used the old house. Papa had the key to the new house, so we could not open it, as he was still away.

We opened the old house and I took mama in. Everyone in the village was waiting. They saw her and gasped - 'Oh, our last mother is gone. I took her in and placed her on her own bed, in her own house, surrounded by everything she was familiar with. Her utensils were there, and so were her bags. But the kitchen was not the same. It was cold and had no fire burning. She was the warmth, the fire, and her fire had been quenched.

We laid her down on her mattress and put a beautiful Japanese kimono dress I had bought from Japan over her. She was breathing deeply, pushing her tongue out to catch wind. She lay for about an hour. Everyone she loved had not yet come. My wife and the children arrived. My sisters, Carolline and Apolonia came in. My brother-in-law Chuhon arrived and stood over her body. At that moment, she breathed her last breath, at our hands, Veronica, papa and mine. She died, a truly noble and happy death.



* This chapter was first published in Catalyst Vol.10, No.3, 1980 - Melanesian Institute, Goroka. P.N.G. Used with permission.



SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON A TRULY NOBLE DEATH - DEATH AND DYING

Step 1 Have someone tell the story of the death of Bernard Narokobi's mother - not using all the detail, but bringing out some of the main points.

Step 2 In small groups discuss the questions - (appoint a recorder/reporter for the report-back session)

(a) What were the main rituals related to death and dying in your old culture?

How was death and dying understood?

(b) What are the similarities and differences between traditional and Christian practices and beliefs about death and burial of the dead? (Traditional and Christian prayers could be studied).

Are there any traditional practices and beliefs which could be revived by Christians?

Are there any religious and social practices which persist which should be thrown away? Any that could be adapted, fulfilled?

Take reports from groups and leave time for clarification of insights.

Step 3 Consider the questions - (first in pairs and then for the whole group)

What should be the Christian attitude to death and the burial of the dead?

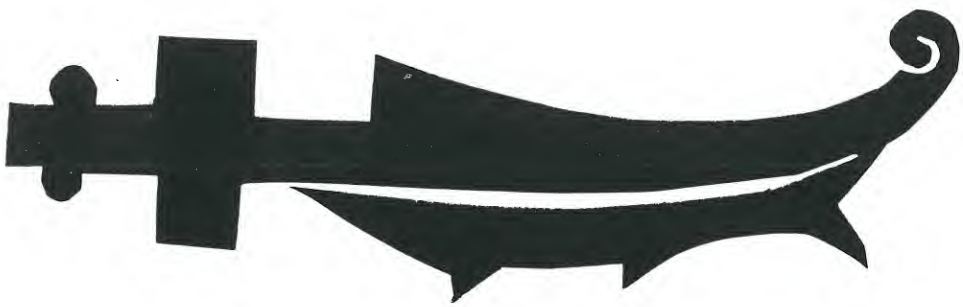
Step 4 What action could be taken to deepen beliefs and bereavement and funeral practices ?

How best may support be given to those who have been bereaved?

Resources: Bible passages such as Psalm 23, John 14: 1-7. 1 Corinthians 15: 1-7, 12-20.

Prayer book services for burial of the dead, Hymn books.

Resource people could give brief talks.



MELANESIAN SACRIFICE AND CHRISTIANITY

Leslie Fugui

Generally, the people of the Pacific, with their old animistic religions, were very spiritual. They believed that the spirits were really present with them, so that everything which had a good effect or a bad effect on their lives must have been done by the spirits. They believed that some spirits were watching and looking after them, protecting them from other evil spirits. Also, spirits could get cross with them if they had committed any sin against the spirits and the living people in the tribes. Therefore the offering of a sacrifice was a very important ritual, because through sacrifice they could make peace with the spirits and with any members of the tribe against whom they had offended.

They did not sacrifice to all the spirits that were around them; they knew that the only spirits they could sacrifice to were their ancestor ghosts. The sacrifices were a type of intercession and an expression of dependency. The form of intercession began with a request to newly dead ancestors, very often a priest. They passed their intercession through the recently dead priest or another ancestor. He would pass on the prayers to the older ancestors who would plead for them to the supreme power whom they called by many names - Akalimae, Gahfanna, Malamba - the universal God, the Absolute Goodness, etc. The supreme being was the one who had all the power to deal with the living. The idea of sacrificing came from this background way of thinking and believing.

The Christian teaching

Christians have the service of Holy Communion, which is a type of sacrifice to the God who created the world, who is the supreme power. Christians do not sacrifice to many spirits because they do not believe in many spirits as in the animist religion. Christians ought to depend on God the creator for the things they want in life. In the Christian church, people believe that God is present with them as the Holy Spirit, as a power to help the church grow in faith and love. Many Christians also believe in angels and in the saints, but they do not sacrifice to them. The big difference is that the ancestor ghosts to whom the people of the old religion offered sacrifices were only humans from this world who died in the past. But the Holy Spirit present in the church is the third person of the Trinity; the angels are heavenly messengers of God. How can we link these two ideas of sacrifice together so that the new can give a Christian meaning to the old?

Pre-Christian people were made in the image of God who created them. Can we strictly say they were not sacrificing to the same creator God to whom Christians also sacrifice? What was the place of the ancestor ghosts in their form of sacrifice? Did they sacrifice to them or through them? One man in the Pacific said that he often talked to his ancestor ghosts because the ghost was related to him and would understand how to pass on his needs to the creator God for the final blessing.

In Christian teaching it is said that Jesus Christ is the Mediator and Advocate to the Father the creator God, because he is both God and man. He knows our human feelings, attitudes and sinfulness. Jesus understands God and man, therefore in our Christian faith, Jesus takes the place of the ancestors. This may be a link, giving continuity between the old and the new. In the Old Testament we read that the Jews often offered sacrifices to God, Yahweh, the Creator. In their intercessions they addressed God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, their ancestor ghosts. What about Christians who believe they have saints as patrons to offer intercessions on their behalf to God the creator? And what about the Christian idea of having guardian angels to watch over us and keep us from evil spirits? There have been many dedicated Christian men and women in the Pacific, holy people, like the saints.

One person said he talked to his dead brother during intercessions because this Christian brother knows him well. Because he is already dead he is closer to God the creator. He went on to say that he believed that Jesus represents many people in the world and can only deal with the most important issues. But his Christian brother ghost can deal with the small needs he often asks of him during Holy Communion.

In the broader meaning of sacrifice, we should be thinking of sacrificing our service, our time and our money. We do this because we have to thank God for his many blessings in this life. In the old religion people sacrificed to God in order to have and win God's favour; it was almost a form of bribery. People believed that the blessing would come once the sacrifice was made. That is why they had constant sacrifices of animals in the past. After sacrificing their labour, their time, and offerings of money, they believed the reward would be granted by the ancestors and the unknown Big Ghosts abiding in the sky. The reward they were thinking of was in this world and for the present time. They did not think of such a place as heaven. The future was not in their minds. Christians believe, when they sacrifice themselves to God in service, time, labour and money, that the reward is not only in the present but in the future as well. Their Christian sacrifice is offered to God because of God's worthiness, and also as a free-will offering (Romans 12:1).

Priests who offer sacrifices

The original priest had the spiritual power to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people in the time of the beginning of the tribe. His name had to be known by the others who came after him. He was the one who would fulfil the sacrifices by passing on the people's intercessions to the supreme being. It was believed in many parts of the Pacific that the men who were to be priests and officiate at sacrifices to the holy being were called through the number one ancestor by the revelation of the supreme power. Anyone who was a priest had to be a sound, good spiritual man, able to keep the rules and obey the taboos of the tribes. One pagan priest said he has to live a holy life in order to be able to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people. He also said he has to observe

the tribal taboos and discipline himself to be able to do the work and uphold the standard. The priests had to be very holy so as to be able to offer the holy sacrifice to the ancestors. He had to know the sacrificial prayers, have a good relationship with everyone, and be wise, brave and willing to teach and serve the people.

The people who became priests after the original priest took their sacrificial powers from him. Very often the new person who was to be priested offered a pig in the name of the original ancestor priest, whose living power was reflected in him as in a mirror. The newly priested person would eat part of the pig as a sign of the power (mana) being handed over to him. From then on he had the power to offer sacrifices. There was a sense of continuity in the passing of the power and sacrificial rights from the original priest to the new one. So there was a ritual, repeated from the beginning of the tribe to the present. For many who have become Christians the same type of belief persists, through the ritual of ordination.

How can we adapt the ideas of the old religion, linking them to the new religion to provide continuity?

In the book of Hebrews Jesus Christ is described as a high priest for ever and ever, and for everyone. The writer describes Jesus as a perfect priest and as a perfect sacrifice. He is also called a holy priest, blameless, unstained, separated from sin. In the old religion the priests were expected to be holy and blameless but because they were only human beings they found it hard to keep up to the requirements. Jesus Christ never failed. He never committed any sin. He was appointed by God to be a priest because he was perfect, the only one fit to be a priest for ever and ever. God made a covenant with Jesus, that his priesthood is from the beginning of time to the end of time. The writer of Hebrews says that God sealed this appointment by an oath (Hebrews 7:21). The priests in the traditional religion were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but Christ holds his priesthood permanently because he continues for ever (Hebrews 7:23).

It is a belief in the church that the people who are ministers and offer sacrifices through the service of Holy Communion are called by God. We say they have a Christian vocation. When people are ordained it is believed that they receive the power from Jesus Christ to help them in their future ministry. They should know how to discipline themselves and live good moral lives because of their link with Jesus Christ who is the perfect priest. The church ministers should represent Christ in the world of work and the torn world of many problems.

The sacrificial places

In the primal religion every tribe had to select a special place for the sacrificial shrine. In the mountainous places they often chose the shrines to be on a mountain or near a cave. Such places created a

sense of awe and holiness. They were remote, for religious purposes only, and had the quietness people often need for meditation. The expression of awareness of the presence of the ghosts in their minds and feelings was a great thing. They regarded the place for sacrifice as a holy place. No ordinary man should walk over or near the special spot where the victim was sacrificed. Only the priest could do that. This was because during the taboo rituals and ceremonies certain taboo words and names were used in that place. Powerful prayers were said there, skulls of the ancestors were kept there, and special revelations, visions and signs were received.

Jesus Christ offered himself as a perfect victim for our sins, on the hill of Calvary, the place of the skull outside the wall (Matthew 27:31-33). In the eyes of the Jews this hill of Calvary was seen as a bad place, a place where criminals were killed. It was a fearful place, where many would not go at ordinary times. Through Christ's sacrifice of himself in that place, his power transformed the whole meaning of death, the whole meaning of sacrificial places, and the whole meaning of sacrifice, showing that death is not the end, and that God can be worshipped anywhere because he is the God of the universe. He is to be worshipped where Christian people are gathered as well as in the hearts of men and women in the world. Christians, of course, have places of worship, church buildings where they offer the sacrifice of Holy Communion. How can we treat church buildings so as to continue elements of the traditional beliefs associated with speical places? This needs clarification and explanation by Christians in the light of the gospel.

The sacrificial victim

In the traditional religion, pigs were often the victims for sacrifices. In the Solomon Islands the pig had to be a spotless one. It was not allowed to wander about in the village as it might eat unclean things and go to women's toilets and delivery areas. The pig was to be fenced and kept under strict supervision. The people believed that the ancestor ghosts would not accept the pig if something bad or wrong were done to it, because it was to represent the life of the people. If the ghosts were not pleased with it, then the people who offered the sacrifice would be in trouble. People could die because of the unworthy victim. There was always fear in the minds of the people. The victim was to be perfect because it should please the ghosts. The sacrifices were offered for many different reasons, but the most common ones were to make reconciliation with God for offences done, to plead for blessing and prosperity, and for protection from evil things.

In 1 Peter 1:19 Christ is described as a perfect victim. The precious blood of Christ is like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. Christ became man so that we can have a perfect, sinless man to meet the standard God requires. In contrast with the traditional sacrifice which was provided by the people, at Calvary God himself provided the victim, a sacrifice for the sin of the world. Through Christ's death we are able to come near God. In Hebrews 2:10 the author says, "It was only right that God, who creates and preserves all things, should make

Jesus perfect through suffering, in order to bring many sons to share his glory. Jesus is the one who leads them to salvation." The pig that was offered at the traditional sacrifices did not understand what the pain and suffering would be, whereas Christ as a human being knew the pains and suffering which as a victim he had to undertake to make us one with God.

The purposes of sacrifice

As has been said, in the traditional religion sacrifices were made to win the favour of the ancestor ghosts. There were many types of sacrifice with many different aims and objectives. Some sacrifices were personal ones, some were communal, with ceremonial rituals and spiritual taboos. There were peace sacrifices, where a sacrifice was offered to make peace between the ghosts and the living, between relatives, tribes, enemies. There were sacrifices as a means of forgiveness and repentance, sacrifices for war and for wealth. People offered these because of the dependency they had on the dead ghosts of ancestors. They thought the ghosts provided the things they wanted in life, therefore they had to sacrifice to them. The sacrifices included offering a pig, some money, and giving of time to prepare for the occasion.

The communal sacrifices involved many people in much time and work. The whole community was involved and there were lots of taboos to be observed, such as fasting and abstaining from eating certain foods and from attendance at death rituals. Time to prepare for the sacrifice was given by everyone freely, without any question of payments. Everyone had a sense of duty and heartfelt commitment, with dedication. If they did not obey and follow what was required they would be in trouble with the ghosts of the ancestors. At this period there was dancing and custom singing every night until the last day of the sacrifice feast, when everything was declared free to be eaten. Fasting and abstaining were finished, and the whole community was liberated.

In many parts of Melanesia, the blood of the victim pig was poured onto stones or holes in the special place of sacrifice. This was because the people believed that the blood had life; when it was poured the people's sins would be forgiven and life would spring again and be as strong as the stone and the soil. It was also a recognition that the land is the source of life producing food and water for human consumption.

The whole purpose of the incarnation, the redemptive work of Christ, the crucifixion and resurrection, was to save sinners and the people from the eternal punishment. Christ came to bring salvation to the world through the love of God and his perfect sacrifice on the cross.

To make the gospel meaningful to the people of the Pacific we should find some links and connections between the traditional religion and Christianity. To conclude I would say that all the meanings of

the traditional sacrifices are summed up and fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice. On the day of the Passover of the Jews, Christ had a feast (Holy Communion) with the disciples. He commanded them to continue, with sacrificial service, to remember him and the sacrifice he would offer at Calvery. In Holy Communion Christians are sharing in fellowship the perfect sacrifice of Christ who offered himself on the cross for the sins of the world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON MELANESIAN SACRIFICE AND CHRISTIANITY

Step 1: Open up issues about sacrifice raised in the paper on the topic, relating these to the local traditions of sacrifice. This could be done through a short statement by the leader or through a panel discussion using at least one person with a good memory of the past.

Step 2: Small group discussion (appoint a recorder/reporter) on such questions as: "Why were sacrifices offered?" "To whom?" "By whom?" "Who supplied the sacrifices?"

Report to large group - with questions to panel if answers not known.

Step 3: Small group work on the question, "What were some of the values and beliefs in the traditional sacrifices that can in some way be linked to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross? "What does the sacrifice of Christ mean for present day Christians?" Study 1 Cor. 11: 23-25, and Hebrews 9: 6-15, 10: 10-13. Receive reports and discuss them.

Step 4: Set out similarities and differences between the traditional and Christian understandings of sacrifice, writing lists on a chart.

Questions	Traditional	Calvary	Holy Communion
To whom were the sacrifices made?			
By whom?			
Who provided the sacrifice?			
etc.....			

Step 5: What action should be taken as a result of this study? Plan the action.

Resources

Article by Leslie Fugui. Biblical references - especially Hebrews 9 and 10. Local leaders with knowledge of old culture. Services of Holy Communion in prayer books.

SORCERY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere

What follows in this paper is my own experience of sorcery in my village. It is going to be a straightforward account of the way people talk about it and how they react to it. According to Macfarlane's description, witchcraft is different from sorcery and ...

> "is an inherent quality whereas sorcerers act in a certain way ... the witch is permanently malicious, having inherited her power or being taught it very early in life, while the sorcerer is only dangerous at specific times ... " *

Sorcery as described above is much more prevalent than witchcraft in Fiji. Both are driven by antisocial feelings.

Sorcery

In my own village there are three men who have been suspected of sorcery for quite some time. (I rely very much on the information given to me by the people about the facts of this narrative.) They are the most hated and the most feared men in the village. I was once warned by an old woman in the village that I must not dare to cross one of their doors in case I might be harmed. People talk about them secretly.
People are almost afraid to mention their names. The sorcerer on the other hand knows full well that he is hated and he tries all he can to ward off all suspicions about him. One of these men came to see me in my house in December 1978. I had heard all sorts of stories about this man before. I had a strong feeling that he had something in mind when he came. I learned later that he intended to try me out. I was just settling into the village with my family after spending three years studying overseas. He started by saying that he was leading an unhappy life. All the people in the village were gossiping about him. He felt isolated from them and wouldn't like this to continue indefinitely. So he asked me if I could make a prayer to prove whether or not he was a sorcerer. I quickly sensed that this would be an opening for him to make a big story around the villages if nothing happened after the prayer. So I declined to do this immediately. I assured him that there is nothing wrong about praying but it would be best for both of us to do something more than merely praying. So I suggested to him that we could meet again the following week and I would be able to give more thought to his request. The next few days I tried to call on several people in the village, seeking their advice on the matter and also discussing with them this incident and other related matters. All of them told me that this sorcerer and his younger brother had killed several people. One of those killed was the illegal husband of the sorcerer's legal wife whom

* From A. D. J. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. Appendix 2.

he left several years back. Now he is living with another woman. The deceased person died from a sickness unknown to the doctors in the nearby hospital in spite of the repeated visits made. The people told me that the alleged sorcerer took away the deceased person's underwear while it was hanging outside one night. He died from pains around his male parts.

The following week I again met the sorcerer. I suggested to him that we go up to the village church for the prayer he requested. I thought that the church would be the best place to meet since it is neutral and the people would make no interruptions. I invited the village pastor (Vakatawa) to come along with us. It was only natural that he should also be involved in the matter. This was my first experience with a sorcerer. All I had in mind was to face this man as honestly as possible and also try to lead him to the thought that prayer is only one part of an encounter or meeting of this nature. He was a bit hesitant about going inside the church though it was not his first visit. He goes to church every Sunday. He turned around and told me that he did not feel well dressed. He was quite neat so I told him it was quite alright. I first said a word of advice before we started praying and told them that it would be best for all of us not to expect something to happen quickly after our prayer either to the sorcerer or to somebody else but that we simply wait upon God as we should in all our prayers. Then I started asking the sorcerer a series of questions. I tried very hard not to appear as a judge before him but to allow our conversation to be as free as possible and be led to the truth. I recalled to him some of the stories he had told some villagers. For example, he once told them a certain black dog had been following him for quite some time and that at one stage the dog visited him in the hospital when he was sick. He was also seen making vakalolo (Fijian pudding) one day. This pudding was later offered to somebody (perhaps to the dog). This was another story related to me by a villager who was on the spot where the pudding was offered. I tried to persuade him to put before us all that we should know. I told him that if he really wanted happiness back he should be honest with us. What he needed was confession. I knew that this was not coming forth. He was making self-defence here and there and a real meeting or encounter was at this stage impossible. None of the villagers were listening outside: only we three were inside. The thought came to me in a very real way that the sorcerer was not genuine about coming to prove whether or not he was a sorcerer, or about his desire for happiness. He did not expect our meeting to proceed in the way it did. We sat in the village church for almost 1½ hours in the early afternoon. We came outside after we had made a short prayer each. I could see a change in the sorcerer's face. He looked as though he had been defeated in a power struggle, was jealous, and was thinking aloud.

I have known this sorcerer and his younger brother since my boyhood. As far as the village was concerned, they could be

described as "successful" in those days. They were running a small scale business. I once worked for them to enable me to go to the Theological College in Suva. I think it was about the time when their small business was failing that they looked elsewhere for an alternative source of power or superiority. It seems that there is a strong thirst for power among sorcerers. There are chiefs in villages, for example, who are sorcerers. They try to make themselves strong in the face of the changes that are happening.

What I have said so far may be considered as one aspect of looking at sorcery. Perhaps the other is deeper than this. And I'm not even able to say at this point what precisely this depth means. It would not be too much to say that sorcery is on the increase in Fiji today and perhaps throughout the entire Pacific Islands. This is happening in spite of the modern developments of recent years, not to mention the presence and activities of the Christian churches in this country in the last 130 years or so. There must be a very real unmet need somewhere. We live in a world where primitivity is some people's sophistication and sophistication is some people's primitivity. Generally speaking, it seems to me that in Fiji the Christian church has not sufficiently looked into the thought world of the native Fijian and that perhaps his culture and his world have not been taken into account seriously as far as the expression of the Christian faith is concerned. This is a very real challenge indeed.

The medicine man

Fijian medicine is practised not only by men but also women of various types. I don't have space to deal with them here. The other day I received a letter from a very close friend who has been sick for quite some time. In his letter, he wrote these words:

> "I have been "clubbed alive" (moku bula).* If I go to the hospital, I will surely die. Please ask the woman in your house to come and see me."

This friend strongly believes that he had been harmed by a sorcerer. He has a good job and he earns well. His village is known for sorcery. As has been said, the belief in sorcery is strong in Fiji. My wife's aunt who is known to many people here in Suva and Lautoka as "the old woman" possesses some power that defeats the power of the sorcerer. She comes from the village of Nukutubu on the bank of the Rewa River and is a direct descendant of one of Fiji's great ancestors, Rokola. Rokola is believed to be the great Craftsman of Fiji. Salome (the old woman) is a direct descendant of Rokola. I have seen with my own eyes sick people who had been cured by Salome

* To be "clubbed alive" (moku bula) means that the person has fallen victim of an act of sorcery. If nothing is done about it, he will surely die.

When she stayed with us for a couple of weeks our house was always full of sick people from around this area as well as from Suva. She uses four things: prayer, coconut oil, Fijian herbs for medicine, words of advice. She is a strong believer in prayer and she usually encourages her patients to pray. Fijians, Indians and other races come to see her. She prays with them all. She also rubs the body and especially the affected parts of the patients with the coconut oil. This is kept in a special bottle. Patients tell us that there is a difference in her hands when using the oil. Afterwards she prescribes appropriate herbal medicine. She knows hundreds of different herbs for medicine. She said she learnt them all from her father. To almost every sick person who comes, Salome gives a word of advice. One will often hear her telling the sick person to go back to his or her "yavu",* that he or she must not forget the village, the elders and ancestors. Harm and sickness can easily befall someone when the relationship between a person and the "yavu" is violated.

Fear of sorcery

I note the danger of sorcery. Its presence in the village brings fear and the relationship among the people is adversely affected. And this is bad. The church is required to do something about this. It can never let fear rule over a village and its people. That which has to be done is best done not from the pulpit by strong moralising sermons but through an honest encounter with the sorcerer who must be met first as a person and secondly as a sorcerer. In some villages this is done. The suspected sorcerer is brought to the village meeting and is questioned. This can greatly help. It can also cause a greater harm if badly handled.

In some villages they form prayer groups and pray for these sorcerers, believing that Christ's power is greater. There is no personal contact whatsoever with the sorcerer. The sorcerer does his own thing and the prayer group their own thing. And the two powers are left to be involved in a secret combat. Anything can be expected out of this combat. The formation of prayer groups of this nature brings comfort to a great many people in the village. But I think we need something more than just praying. Human relationship has to be restored at a much more personal level. The cross with which God waged war against the principalities and powers of this world is a personal cross.

He died. He went into Jerusalem and faced all the powers - religious, social, economic and political. He faced them all in his own person and then he died on the cross. His death brings to an end all forms of superstitions. All Christians are called to fight against these superstitions, following Christ who has won victory over them all in his death and resurrection.

* "Yavu" means the village, elders, ancestors and customs. Literally, it means "foundation" of a house or the site of an old village. It is the best word in Fijian, it seems to me, for "world". Not world in general but that world of relationship. The other Fijian word for world is "vuravura" which referes to geography more than to this personal human level.

As I indicated earlier on, the church has to ask herself why sorcery continues to exist in spite of all the changes that the nation has experienced in previous years. This is a very large area for study in future and must be taken up. And perhaps one can also mention the emergence of similar "groanings" in our society at the political level. They may very well be related to the "groaning" at the level of sorcery. In Fiji, the third political party calls itself Fijian Nationalist. It is not very popular in the light of a multiracial society, but it is there. At times, it puts before the nation those issues about which our world of technology and progress takes little account. It seems that in the light of the present circumstances in Fiji and in the world, it may well be a "voice in the wilderness" to be reckoned with.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON SORCERY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

Step 1: A brief introduction by the leader - outlining the plan for the session, and mentioning the importance of bringing the presence of sorcery into the open, and of regarding sorcerers with Christian concern.

Step 2: In small groups, discuss the following questions:

(a) What cases of sorcery are actually known by group members?

(b) What are the ways in which sorcery operates in your community?

(c) How do members feel about sorcery and sorcerers? (Fear, anger etc.)

(d) Why does sorcery continue to be strong after churches have been established for a long time?

Step 3: Report and list on a blackboard the main points.

Step 4: In groups, discuss the following question. What is a Christian attitude to sorcery and sorcerers? Use Acts 8:9-13 and Acts 16:16-22 when seeking for answers. Group members should be invited to suggest other biblical passages.

Step 5: Report and then clarify conclusions from steps 2-4 using the following chart

Custom beliefs and practices	Christian beliefs and practices	Help that we still need.

Step 6: What further action should be taken about sorcery and sorcerers?

Resources

Article by Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere; People with a special knowledge of sorcery; Report "Sorcery Among the Tolai People" (New Britain) by William Kaputin, Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea; Occasional Paper No. 8; Biblical references. Publications of the Melanesian Institute, P.O. Box 571, Goroka, EHP, Papua New Guniea.

CONFESSION, FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION

Reporter: Cliff Wright

The following is based on discussions at a Tongan workshop on culture in faith in 1979, and an interview with Lopeti Taufa, principal of Sia-atoutai Theological College, Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

Story - Hu-lou-ifi

Christian Tongan tradition, carried forward into the present time, has a way of reconciling parties who are hostile to one another. It is called the "hu-lou-ifi" and involves wearing leaves from an ifi tree as a garment. This is not decoration for a joyful occasion, but a symbol of repentance and humility, to show that the wearers of the hu-lou-ifi desire to be forgiven and reconciled.

In 1947 there was a volcanic eruption on the island of Niuafo'ou. The people who lived on the island were evacuated by the government. Among those evacuated were some considered to be the late Queen Salote's people. She had given them a place to stay temporarily on her estate, under her protection and care. Queen Salote's husband's people used to frequent the estate of the Queen to visit her people from Niuafo'ou. Quarrelling occurred, and the people of the village belonging to the Queen's husband beat the Niuafo'ou people and severely hurt them. The Queen was furious. It was clear that her anger would not be calmed unless some extreme measure was taken to show sadness on the part of the offenders.

The people of the village decided to wear ifi leaves and ask for forgiveness and reconciliation. To show that they were sorry for what they had done they put on mourning dress, as though they were mourning for some dead person. They also wore leaves of the ifi tree around their legs. Then they approached the Queen. But the leaves alone would not effect reconciliation unless they took with them the Queen's own grand-child. This they did. They wrapped him in a type of mat customarily worn as a token of respect.

The people of the village wore similar mats. In this way they were identified with the grandchild, and the grandchild was identified with the offenders. The whole group went in procession to the home of the Queen, observed by all. They sat quietly outside the palace. The purpose was quite clear - to make confession and to ask for forgiveness. The grandson (the present Crown Prince) stayed with the village people. The Queen came out, stood on the verandah of the palace and scolded them, expressing her anger at what they had done. The people asked to be forgiven for their offence. They pleaded in the name of the grandchild and, after some time, the Queen's anger subsided. The people were declared forgiven; there was reconciliation and atonement.

Culture and Faith

The following points were noted in the workshop discussion:

1. In the traditional way the grandchild would speak to the offended grandfather or grandmother in words to this effect:

> "These people have come with me (identifying himself with the offenders). If you are angry, do what you like with me, but allow these people to go."

In other words, he would like not only to take the blame on himself, but also suffer the consequences of the offence committed by the people. The reconciliation of the offenders and the offended would not be completed until a member of the immediate family came with the offenders and identified himself with them.

This traditional way of achieving reconciliation between people is still very effective: Should it be lost?

2. An analogy can be drawn between this tradition and our reconciliation through Christ with God. The at-one-ment is made possible through the Son of God, no one else, certainly not by any good work we have done - not even by a great show of sorrow. It is through Jesus Christ that the central element in our reconciliation with God is made possible. The grandchild identified himself to some degree with those who had committed the offence; Christ makes a complete identification with sinners, even though sinless himself there is atonement through the intercession of the Son.

3. The very act is a confession of fault, a public demonstration, shown clearly by wearing the mourning costume and the ifi leaves. It is an acted confession. In the Christian understanding there is a clear parallel. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

4. The act of atonement includes for the Christian an element of reprimand by God, just as in the story the Queen reprimanded the people of the village.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON CONFESSION, FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION

Step 1: A group should be gathered before the session to prepare to dramatise the Tongan story told on p 49.
An alternative could be to use a local traditional or modern story dealing with confession, forgiveness, reconciliation.

Step 2: Ask the leader or another appointed person to introduce the theme and the drama.

Step 3: Present the drama.

Step 4: Divide into groups to discuss the meaning of the Tongan story, or another local one which has been selected. Appoint a recorder/reporter.
Consider the following questions -

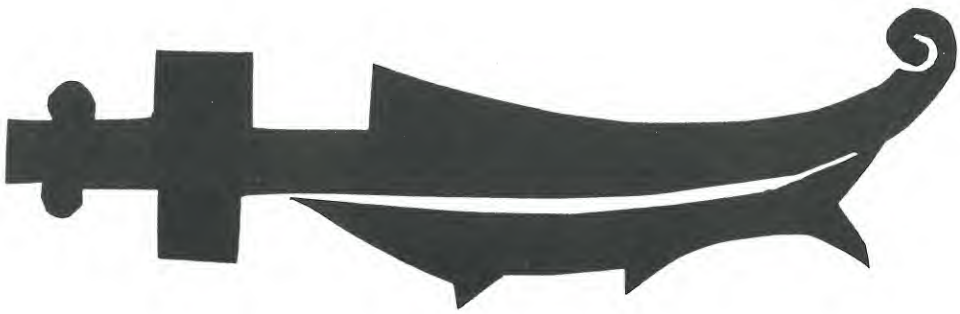
(a) What part did confession and forgiveness have in bringing about reconciliation?

(b) What does the Bible teach in the following passages - James 5: 16, Luke 23: 32-34, Matt.5: 21-26.

Step 5: Receive group reports, listing the main points made.

Step 6: In pairs, or groups of three consider the following question - "Are there any actions that should be taken by individuals, families or communities to bring about reconciliation?" Share as is appropriate.

Resources: Article on Confession, Forgiveness, Reconciliation.
Traditional ways from your own culture involving confession, forgiveness and reconciliation, such as the use of the Samoan fine mat, and the peace child in Irian Jaya (see Don Richardson's "Peace Child" Regal Books.)



THE FADING ECHO

John Kadiba

The shell horn is sounding,
People are shouting,
They are coming,
Coming from villages far and near,
I hear the triumphant cries,
Of men carrying pigs dangling on poles.
It is a feast,
Feast to honour a recent dead.
I hurry to join in the exuberant spirit.
But I stop... the village is quiet,
Everything is still,
There is no feast.
I listen...
The horn sound, the triumphant cries
Are fading - fading into the distance.
I turn and walk away... slowly.

It is early morning,
The village chief is calling,
Men, young and old, the able,
Sharpen your knives and axes,
Eat your morning food,
To Uru's garden go,
Cut trees down,
Put in a good day's work,
Uru's pig meat is worth a day's labour.
The trees are falling,
I hear the laughs, jokes and shouts,
I hurry to join in the exuberant spirit.
But I stop... uncle's garden is quiet,
Everything is still,
Not a person in the garden,
I listen...
The crashing noises of falling trees,
The voices
Are fading - fading into the distance,
I turn and walk away... slowly.

The shell horn is sounding,
Sad and long - drawn;
Dogs are barking and howling;
The women are singing the mourning song,
It is a death.
The word has gone out,
Relatives are coming,
Coming from far and near,
I hear their weeping,
I hurry to join the mourners,
To see the body decorated for burial

But I stop... the village is quiet,
Everything is still,
There is no death.
I listen...
The horn sound, the howls, the mourners' cry,
Are fading - fading into the distance,
I turn and walk away... slowly.

I am puzzled,
What is happening?
I want to see what I hear,
I want to feel what I hear,
Where are they?
The feasting spirits,
The gardening spirits,
The mourning spirits,
Where are they?
Where have they gone?
What is happening?
I am troubled.
The stillness grips me,
Everything is still,
The village is quiet,
Then it dawns on me... slowly,
It is only the fading echo,
Yes, the fading echo of the past,
Fading into the distance.
Will I ever see them again?
Will I ever feel them again?
Will I ever hear them again?

I am sad,
I am lonely inside,
I feel an emptiness inside;
Things are breaking - breaking down,
My root is shaking,
There is nothing stronger to grip on;
I want help,
But the ancestral spirits are silent,
I look to the few living,
But their faces are blank,
They seem to be alive,
But their creative spirits seem gone.
What will I do?
I am lost,
I want to go somewhere but to where.

Emptiness grips me,
Everything is still,
The village is quiet;
I try once more to listen,
Listen to the fading echo.
In the stillness,
I listen to my heart beat,
I am still alive;
But there is darkness inside me,
I can not see a way out.

A dim light is shining,
Shining in the darkness,
It is coming towards me,
It is shining brighter and brighter;
I feel a Presence,
A greater Presence,
Not like the presence of the ancestral spirits,
It is the Presence of the Great Spirit,
Now that the ancestral spirits are silent,
I feel the Presence of the Great Spirit more;
I am grasped by the Presence,
It seems a comforting Presence,
I no longer want to wander.
Everything is still,
The village is quiet,
I am still... to attune myself,
To the new Great Presence;
A new hope has dawned,
There seems to be a way out;
Will my village be attuned to the new Presence,
The Presence of the Great Spirit?

Everything is still,
I hear a still small voice speaking,
Speaking inside;
It is the voice of the Great Spirit.
Be still,
I am the Great Spirit,
In the beginning I was,
In the end I will be,
I am the eternal Spirit.
Though your root is shaking,
Though your village life is breaking,
Though the echo is fading into the distance,
My Presence will be here.
I feel the new Presence,
His light has come in human form,
He is the Form of the Great Spirit,
He is the Self-portrait of the Great Spirit,
The Echo of the Eternal Spirit.

His Presence has grasped me,
I am no longer lost,
The ancestral spirits of the fading echo are
Silent,
The Great Spirit has spoken,
Spoken of new hope,
Of new direction;
I must go on.

(This poem is not to be used or quoted without
the writer's permission.)

SICKNESS, HEALING AND WHOLENESS

John Kadiba

The search for healing

The search for healing in order to maintain or restore health is of interest to everyone. It is not surprising that people came crowding around Jesus when the news of his healing miracles spread.

In search of healing, a rural Melanesian will go from village to village to consult well known traditional healers, or may turn to the spirits of the dead to find the cause of illness and suitable action which may lead to healing. Or he may use herbs, the knowledge of which comes from past generations.

The urban Melanesian will probably follow a similar course, even though there is easier access to health care services in the towns. More wealthy Melanesians will have some knowledge of western medicine, and can afford the services of the best private doctors and the best hospital care.

Traditional Melanesian beliefs and practices

In the traditional Melanesian culture there was no such thing as sickness caused by an accident - even in the case of a coconut falling on someone. All such troubles were understood to be caused by sorcery and witchcraft, which worked through the spirits of trees, stones, ancestors, the recently dead. These beliefs continue among many people today.

Often families are blamed for causing sickness or an accident by enlisting the power of sorcery, or magic. Sickness such as T.B. could have been caused in this way. Often people believe they have the power to find out who was responsible for the illness. One way of doing this is for a man, after prayer, to press a shell onto his forehead. When a suspected person is named he shakes his head. If the shell does not fall off, the person is guilty. I know of a case in which a young man was identified as the guilty one by use of this method. The shell did not fall off when he was named and the head shaken. The young man went into Port Moresby where he died. He was aware that he was under suspicion. The incident caused great tension, division and enmity between the families involved.

In western societies people tend to ask "what" causes an illness or an accident. In Melanesia the basic question is "who" causes the trouble. People may ask what causes the sickness or death, but they then ask who causes the "what". X-rays may show blood clots, but people ask, "Who caused the blood clots?" This understanding is still very common in Melanesia.

Many Melanesian Christians have conflicting thoughts in their minds about such beliefs. They accept the western view that illness can be caused by infection, for example because of contaminated food, or pollution by human waste, through lack of sanitation. But the same people also accept the other understanding that illness is caused by sorcery and witchcraft. This causes tension. Many people are still confused. Stories which are told and personal experiences often seem to confirm the traditional belief in the power of sorcery which is part of the traditional culture, in which there is no such thing as sickness just caused by an accident. As has been said above, all such troubles are traced to sorcery and witchcraft which works through the spirits of trees, stones, ancestors, the recently dead.

A limited number of people see some causes of sickness not as magic and sorcery, but as due to psychological factors. For instance, I once went to a village for a holiday. In a particular house was a youth of about 18 years who had been sick for seven months. When I saw him in a dark room he looked healthy but his heart was beating very fast. The people told me it was sorcery, so I went to the traditional doctor and he told me that after investigation, he had found no evidence of sorcery. I also checked with the medical sister who couldn't see anything wrong after examinations, including X-rays. I opened the windows to let in the light and talked to the young man. He was afraid because he thought sorcery was involved. He was also afraid because he had been rejected by the parents of the girl to whom he had made approaches. Actually he had made approaches to several girls, and had been rejected each time. This was for him a shameful thing. Fear and shame and guilt were there, so he felt he had to withdraw. I was able to talk with him. He went outside and slowly got his strength back.

A tension exists too about using hospitals and other medical centres. When a person is sick people say, "Don't take him to the hospital. The cause of the sickness is traditional and let's deal with it in a traditional way." If the cause is believed to be sorcery or witchcraft, then the normal thing is to approach a sorcerer or to get a witchdoctor to bring about healing through his powers, often using herbs with prayers said over them to give them power. Often the traditional methods fail, and when the sick person is taken to the hospital, it is too late, for early diagnosis is important.

In my own culture most sickness is regarded as part of the retribution system. For example, if someone does something wrong, steals, kills someone, goes to a tabu house, then sickness follows. Someone may take revenge and punish me by making me sick or making my son sick. It is believed that spirits may actually cause accidents because of a person's bad behaviour.

Healing ministry of Jesus

It seems that Jesus was selective in his work of healing. Mark records that when the leper whom Jesus had healed spread the news despite the warning Jesus gave, Jesus' work of teaching and preaching was hindered (Mark 1:45). It should be noted that for John the healings of Jesus were done "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life." (John 20:31). The gospel writers were concerned about what the healing ministry proclaimed by Christ, and what he was doing for people, whether the onlookers understood the message proclaimed in the healing, and their response to this proclamation.

In the community in which Jesus did his work, people believed that there was a very close relationship between sin and sickness and calamity. In John 9:1-12 we have the account of the man born blind. The question was asked of Jesus, "Whose sin caused him to be born blind?" "Was it his own or his parents' sin?" Jesus answered, "His blindness has nothing to do with his or his parents' sins. He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him." In Luke 13:1-5 it is recorded that Jesus rejected the idea that the Galileans whom Pilate killed were worse sinners than other Galileans, and he also rejected the idea that the people on whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse sinners than the other people living in Jerusalem. But he did say, "If you do not turn from your sins, you will all die as they did." Here we see that Jesus recognised the importance of the communal causes of sickness and calamity. Whole communities need to work for health, healing and safety, and not put blame on individual sufferers. Much illness is caused by political, social and economic injustice.

In Mark 2:1-12 we have the account of the man who was sick being let down through the roof, and being healed by Jesus. The man was sick, and Jesus forgave his sin. In this case, it seems that the man's sickness was closely related to his guilt. The man was healed as he accepted forgiveness.

Some Christians think that when you have the Holy Spirit, there is no need for doctors or psychology. Others, who affirm the place of doctors, psychiatrists, and health services, hold that healing through prayer does take place in co-operation with other healing services, or that it is an exceptional gift. They believe that God works through the natural and God heals through human beings using their God-given abilities, accepting that science has its place in healing.

Some Melanesian Christians are able to bring together traditional Melanesian and Christian and western methods of healing, believing that the Holy Spirit can work through them all. There are many instances reported of people whom science was unable to help, being freed and healed through prayer.

Wholeness

I used to think of wholeness as a recovery from sickness; now I see that as inadequate. There is wholeness at the personal level of well-being, inner freedom, self-awareness, of being able to cope with life. Wholeness involves right relationships with other people, with society as a whole, with God. Also wholeness is reconciliation with one's self, even reconciliation with one's own suffering. A paraplegic after an accident can be whole, if he has a healthy attitude to the handicap, somehow rising above it. Wholeness is also a process, not something you can achieve once for all; it is a process of becoming.

The understanding of healing and health without reference to reconciling faith in God (John 3:16) does not give a complete Christian understanding of healing and wholeness.

The story of the ten lepers is an illustration of this thinking. Jesus healed the lepers, but only one "turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks." Jesus said, "Rise and go your way, your faith has made you whole". (Luke 17:11-19). Ten lepers were healed, but apparently only one was made whole, truly reconciled to God, being saved from sin, sickness, meaninglessness, saved into health and eternal life. This is really to be made whole - in the sense of both physical health and of the whole person. The Greek word sozein used in the New Testament carries this meaning.

Many physically handicapped people are in the deepest sense whole persons, even more so than some who are physically healthy. They should not be regarded as weak, inferior, or second class because of their disabilities. Christians have a special responsibility for improving attitudes to the pnysically handicapped. Many handicapped people do indeed minister to those who are less whole, even though physically without handicap.

If we are to understand the New Testament concept of healing and wholeness, then various other practices of the early church should be thought about. Here are some important references:

Visitation (Matthew 25:36-43, Luke 1:68, 7:16, Acts 15:14-36, James 1:27)

Fellowship (Acts 2:42, 2 Cor. 8:4, Gal. 2:9, Phil. 2:1, 1 John 1:3)

Breaking of Bread or the Lord's Supper (Luke 24:35, Acts 2:42)

Sharing of possessions (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35)

The church should use all means of healing made available by medical science, psychology, religion, or traditional medicine, believing that God can work through all of these.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON SICKNESS, HEALING AND WHOLENESS

Step 1: The leader, or another person chosed beforehand should state briefly the aim of the session, which is to gain a deeper insight into the relationship of traditional and Christian understandings of the causes of sickness, and the ways in which healing and wholeness may take place.

Step 2: Organise a role play such as the following. An older woman in the village has died. A relative, the pastor, a western trained doctor, a local healer and a nurse meet and discuss the death. Each should receive the following briefing beforehand and discuss their plan all together.

Relative: A man who thinks that the death was caused by sorcery. He is angry and afraid. He thinks about finding out who caused the death and punishing him/her.

Pastor: Thinks the cause of the death was an infection. Is uncertain as to whether the death is a punishment because of sin, about "who" or "what" could have been responsible for the infection. He had prayed for the women's healing.

Western trained doctor: A Pacific Islander who didn't believe in the power of sorcery. Thought the woman should have been brought to the hospital sooner. Then, most likely she would not have died.

Local healer: Believes that the death had been caused by sorcery, as his own herbal medicines had not cured the woman. He is a Christian, but is suspicious of western medicine.

Nurse: Thinks the death was caused by bad hygeine. Is very keen on preventive medicine, and that psychological help is important in healing.

Step 3: In small groups discuss the issues raised in the role play by each of the actors. Focus on the understandings of the causes of sickness, accidents, death as shown in the role play. Discuss the question, "What is a Christian understanding of healing and wholeness?" (Reference could be made to John Kadiba's article.) Appoint a recordery reporter.

Setp 4: Group reports on findings - write the most important pointson a black board. Have general discussion.

Step 5: Divide into groups, one group studying John 9:1-12, another Mark 2:1-12, another Luke 17:11-19. Question for each: "What does this passage say about the attitude of Jesus to sickness and healing?"

Step 6: Receive reports and discuss biblical teachings.

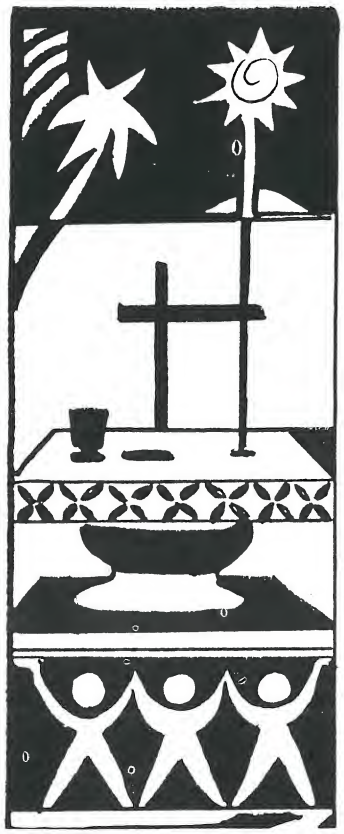
Step 7: List the differences and similarities between the Christian, traditional and western understandings of the sickness and healing.

Traditional	Western	Christian

Step 8: Have a time of prayer for the sick and suffering.

Resources

Article by John Kadiba, Biblical references, Resource people with special local knowledge.



USING INDIGENOUS MUSIC AND ART IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND EDUCATION

Ellison Suri

Through our music and art we are able to meet the needs of the people and satisfy our unvoiced emotions. If we lose our ability to express ourselves creatively, we lose an essential part of our Solomon Island heritage. Due to rapid changes in the Pacific we must hold firmly to the foundations of our culture contained in our music and arts. Our worship should be relevant, rooted, and so grounded in this culture.

This is my main reason for writing. The local churches already use ancient chants and tunes for the liturgy, as in Kyrie, Sanctus, Gloria, Creed, Agnus Dei and also carvings, paintings, bamboo weaving and inlaid shells in church buildings. This should be extended, deepened and studied, so that the inspiration of the Solomon Island musicians and artists may fulfil God's purpose for his people in Malaita and the world.

Music

When the missionaries came to the Solomons they brought with them their own European style of liturgy and music. Little effort was made to incorporate the music of indigenous people. Some missionaries believed there was nothing which could be integrated into Christian worship because it was pagan. However it is now realized no music is either holy or pagan, secular or sacred. It is the use to which it is put that matters.

Martin Luther at the time of the Reformation said, "Why must the devil have all the best tunes?" He borrowed good folk songs and other music that the people knew and put sacred words to them. John and Charles Wesley put words to sea chanties and borrowed popular tunes from any source they could find.

For worship to have relevance it must relate to the cultural background of the people. In Lau this should be taken into account. The necessity of incorporating local cultural forms was basic to the vision of Bishops Selwyn and Patteson in their mission to the Solomons. After their death this ideal was not fully shared by their successors.

With the growing sense of Lauan identity, many elements from the old ideas are returning. Since 1950 young Lauan composers have been writing songs for use in worship.

The music for the Mass, the supreme act of Anglican public worship, has recently been incorporating native and cultural forms. The words have been translated into Lauan; the Creed, Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei have been set to Lauan music. The people sing this Mass with pride and meaning. The style of the music is indigenous and simple.

With the establishment of the Independent Province of Melanesia, and the growth of national spirit, a new phase is opening up which is affecting the inner life of the church. There is strong approval of indigenous worship. The use of drums (o'o) and rattles (kisikisi) in services convey exultation and joy as in singing the Sanctus.

Once, if one asked a Lau man the question, "Do you prefer western hymns?" he would answer, "Yes", because they are reminders of what the missionary church brought into the Solomons. Today young people are beginning to appreciate Lauan music. Early converts could not bear to hear native music because it was associated with pagan beliefs. But now we are beginning to discover that what is good in our own music makes Christian worship more real to us.

There is a great need for Lauan hymn writers and talented composers to be inspired by their own insights into both Christianity and their own musical culture. Hymns should come from the whole Christian world, including Lau. Biblical themes can be the basis of Lauan songs and hymns. Old hymns can be translated into Lauan and set to village tunes.

With the maturing of Christianity, and since Malaita has its independent Diocese, worship is bound to become more indigenous. Of course we must retain in Christian worship what is vital to all lands where Christ is worshipped, but we also must include the renewing principle which builds up the faith of ordinary people for today in Lau.

This requires a firsthand knowledge of the Lord of the church, and the ability to express that knowledge, gained through meditation and thinking, by the help and power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the embodiment of the creative redeeming love of God for each nation in each situation. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Isa. 42:3).

The use of indigenous music and art in the whole life of Christian churches, but especially its worship, is bound up with true conversion. It must come out of the response of one's whole being to the knowledge of the Lord himself. It must be an expression of what God is saying to us within and without the church, in our own culture and our own time.

In true worship and service, "God will put his law within them and will write it upon their hearts, then they will know him from the least of them to the greatest" (Jer. 31:34).

Indigenisation of church music and art does not mean a borrowing or imposition of external things but "making it my own" because Christ Jesus has "made me his own" (Phil. 3:12).

When we are true to the heart of the Bible and our faith we realise God's openness is to the whole world and that each race shows forth some aspect of his primary revelation according to each native culture with its unique insights and skills.

We believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the whole world, the Lord of history, has been dealing with mankind in all times and in all places. In this conviction we study the rich heritage of our Lauan culture with its own stories, dances, songs, music and art forms.

This brings new life into the worship of the church, its education, its community life, and should be welcomed as a sign of the Spirit's enriching action.

Christmas hymn

Here is a Christmas carol about the birth of Jesus our Lord and Saviour using Lauan words and music set to a Biblical story:

Lau	English
Ie na bibiu abu Eteo mala wela siofa Iruru na ni tenia Lao gula hano ni kau	Dear little baby Jesus Sleeps as a poor lonely boy On his dear mother's breast In the cattle shed at night.
Chorus	Chorus
Ensel gi na nu Fa initoa God Famouria futa Fanua lama iano toa gi sui da nu Elea ana Kresmadsde	Angels singing praise Praising God on high Saviour now is born Bringing peace and joy on earth to men We sing praise to God on Christmas Day.
Gia baelafea a famouri Nia lea mai ka to fai gia Lafua na fualana gia Masia mouria firi	We give thanks to our Saviour Who has come down to save us all He set us free from evil To life eternity.
Wela a God nia baita liu Fataia fua na toa sui Nalia mai na farono la Oloa mana gwaramabea	This child God, man and king to be Whom God has shown to all mankind He brought with him the good news Of righteousness and peace.
Fafo nai lani Bethlehem Fe bulu e sina maru Sina tona elea diana Olo-sia manata gia sui	Above the sky o'er Bethleham Bright shining star has shown the light The light of peace joy and love That heals the hearts of men.
Nu baita baelafea God Wela futa ani Mary Ma fai nia Manoedo Abu Sikada na mae to ka tau.	Praise, honour, thanks to God we sing, Jesus born of the Holy Maid With Father and with Holy Ghost Now and forever more AMEN.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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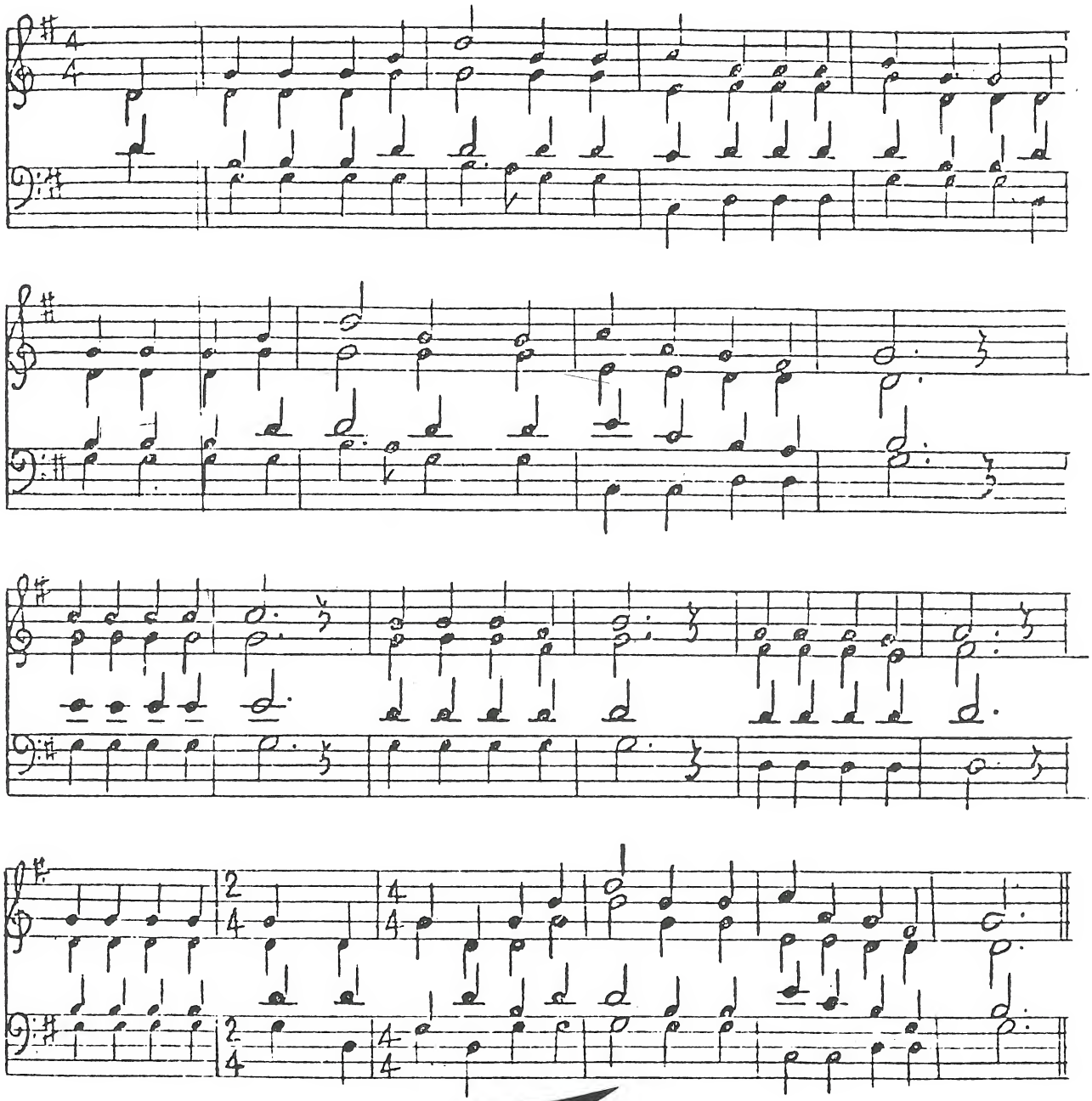


Dance: Au Maku (lament)

Au Maku is a lament over the dead. This dance is performed outdoors and indoors. It is performed indoors when the dead person is still in his or her coffin. The dance will then be performed in a sitting position. Two long rows of women face the coffin. In the centre will be the leading chanter who sings about the history of the one who has passed away; at the same time the rest respond by singing "ae ae" repeatedly many times. The term "ae ae" is a sorrowful expression. When it is sung repeatedly, women often cry with tears of sorrow in their eyes. This continues for two to four days, until the burial day. After the burial day the dance will be performed outdoors, and this time in a standing position. The main chanter will be at the front, chanting and dancing, and the two rows follow on. Each dancer holds a piece of white cloth in her right hand. As they dance they wave the piece of cloth as a means of saying goodbye and to wish the dead a happy journey to the new world of spirits. Before cloth was introduced a fan made of coconut leaves was used. Immediately a person has passed away there is much wailing and crying. But as soon as the Au Maku is performed the people stop wailing, because this is the time when people pay tribute, respect and honour to the departed. Also it is more important to listen to the words of the song and history of the departed. After the Au Maku is over the priest will go to his shrine and offer prayers for the happiness of the departed, protection for the living from sickness, hunger, trouble, and that the departed may live in peace and harmony with the living.

Today in the church, the Au Maku is performed when an important person has passed away. It is performed in a Christian way. In the year 1975 after the burial of our former Archbishop John, the Au Maku was performed. The women, dressed in white dresses with white handkerchiefs, danced and waved the Bishop goodbye and wished him a blessed journey to the presence of the Risen Lord. If an ordinary Christian passes away, the Christians will sing songs of faith at the home of the departed. They believe that in faith and hope Christians die in the Lord, therefore they sing hymns of comfort and not of sorrow. Christians have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord and should not regard death as sorrowful but as the next step to eternal life. This is not to regard death as nothing, but as a paradise and rest in the bosom of the Risen Christ. So today Christians sing comforting hymns about the forgiveness of sins, rest, sleep, life and of the resurrection of departed Christians so that faith may be strengthened and so that the people may be moved to true devotion. I like Simeon in the Temple at Jerusalem when he took the Child Jesus in his arms saying:

"Now I can die content
With peace and joy in sweet repose
Gladly will my eyelids close
And go to sleep the grave within
For mine eyes have the Saviour seen

Whom thou for all of us hast given
To open us the gate of heaven
That he should be the light divine
Which shall upon the gentiles shine
And unto Israel to raise
Glory and everlasting praise (Luke 2: 29-32).

Musical instruments used in worship

Musical instruments, singing and dances played a large part in worship of ancient Lau. Musical instruments were used in temple worship, in salutation, in invocation and in praise. They played a great part in rituals, religious ceremonies and in worship.

Slit gongs The slit gong (o'o) is made of hard wood called ligi. The best portion of the tree is used. An o'o can be made in the bush when the tree is cut or on the artificial island where it is handy. Men hollow the inside with knives fastened on to long rods. In the past clam shells or stone tools were used.

The o'o is used to convey messages of victory in war, of death, of the arrival of chiefs and priests, of ceremonial rituals and feasts, and of successful harvests in the taro and yam gardens. Different sounds convey different messages and people know whether the message is one of warning, of victory, of harvest, of worship, of feast, of death or of arrival of chiefs and priests.

Nowadays the o'o is used for church Services. In the villages it is played to call people to church. In the cathedral a bell is used to call people but the o'o is played to accompany the Sanctus. In the early morning the o'o is sounded as the rising drum as well as calling people to prepare for morning devotions.

Shell trumpets Shell trumpets (bunu) are made from two different shells, the triton and cassis. The triton shell has a long pointed apex. The mouthhole may be formed by cutting off the sharp tip, or by boring it 2-3 inches from the pointed end. It depends on the maker's choice. The cassis shell has a flat surface in the centre of which the mouthhole is bored. The local name for both triton and cassis is bunu.

The bunu is used for ceremonial performances of the au (dance). The bunu is sounded before the performance begins. The bunu was sounded to call the congregation to come to the temple worship, shrine worship, at offerings, at sacrifices, at initiation. Traditionally it was a call for everybody to gather together at the command of the priest. The bunu was sounded to call everybody to come to a marriage or wedding ceremony or to come to a communal feast and fellowship. When the temple was repaired or a new one built the bunu was sounded for the people to work on it.

When an important person arrived at a village the bunu was sounded to give him honour and respect and to call for villagers to welcome him. Whenever there was an important meeting whether social or religious the bunu was sounded.

At church meetings the bunu is sounded first. When the bishops call for a visit the bunu is sounded for the people to gather and welcome them.

The task of the bunu is to call people. Today the bunu is sounded to call the congregation to go to church worship in the morning, evening and on Sunday.

The use of musical instruments in the worship of ancient Lau reminds me of Psalm 150: 3-6:

> "Praise the Lord!
> Praise him with trumpets, praise him with harps and lyres.
> Praise him with drums and dancing
> Praise him with harps and flutes.
> Praise him with cymbals, praise him with loud cymbals.
> Praise the Lord, all living creatures!
> Praise the Lord!"

Carvings, paintings, pictures

Much of the Bible teaching deals with things that happened 2,000 years ago or more in the distant country of Israel. For reasons of time and space, the Solomon Islander has never seen the land of Palestine, the sea of Galilee, Jerusalem, the wilderness, the apostles, Jesus and many other people and places mentioned in the Bible. It is hard to feel they are real. But relevant carvings, paintings and pictures of our own culture are understood well and remembered easily, because they are closely related to the way people see things in everyday life. At work and at home people are dealing not with abstract ideas, but with real things which they can see and handle. They understand things they see more easily than abstract ideas presented just in words. So carved figures, pictures, and paintings of the Scripture in Melanesian forms on the church walls convey messages which are lasting in the mind of the people. The people are interested to see Melanesian pictures of Christ, saints and other aspects of the Scripture which are being carved and painted on the local church and cathedral walls and also on the altars. This enables them to learn about God very quickly and helps them to remember better.

In order for the response to be real, the gospel needs to be expressed in ways which have meaning for the people. Indigenous music and art forms can contribute to this great purpose.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON USING INDIGENOUS MUSIC AND ART IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND EDUCATION.

Step 1: Brief presentation by a leader indicating that in various countries in the Pacific, churches are developing confidence in using traditional music, paintings, carvings, dramas, dances, architecture to enrich christian worship and education and make it more meaningful, less "foreign" to the people. The fear some people have about reviving "pagan" thoughts and feelings could be mentioned.

The leader should study beforehand the article by Ellison Suri and gather other information about the situation in her/his particular country.

Step 2: In groups discusss these questions:

(a) What fears do you have about using traditional music, dances etc. in Christian worship and education?

(b) What are some of the values which could flow from more extensive use of the traditional music, dances etc?

(c) Study and discuss Psalm 81: 1-5 and Psalm 150: 1-6 and relate them to the group discussions of (a) and (b).

Step 3: Reports from groups and discussion.

Step 4: Organise workshops for creating new music, painting, dances, models, carvings; a Bible story can be chosen as the starting point. A church building could be planned using traditional approaches.
Present results to whole group.

(This workshop could be an additional meeting following steps 1-3 above)

Step 5: Discuss ways in which traditional cultural art forms can be used in christian worship and education. Some ongoing groups could be established to actually write hymns and music, make carvings, do paintings etc.

Resources: Article by Ellison Suri, specially gifted musicians, artists, liturgists in local culture.
Biblical references.

BETEL-NUT SHARING AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Nou Oru

A Papua New Guinean reflection on the significance of betel-nut sharing in relation to fellowship, acceptance and belonging together

Although the use of cigarettes and alcohol is common throughout Papua New Guinea, betel-nut chewing remains firmly entrenched as an important custom.

My paper does not wish to argue with the medical profession which claims that betel-nut chewing is bad for the human body, and a health hazard. I personally do not see myself in a position to argue for or against chewing betel-nut. To do that is to miss the intention of this paper. Neither is it an attempt to convince others to adopt chewing betel-nut. I am well aware of the fact that so many Melanesian Christians have stated that our body is the temple of God and chewing betel-nut destroys the temple. I would question whether that is sound theology or not - but it would require a separate paper to discuss that question. I am presenting my own reflections. You are free to draw your own conclusions in relation to betel-nut chewing.

I feel that it is fair to introduce the elements, for the benefit of those who are not too familiar with betel-nut. This is to give them some idea of what I am talking about.

Research has shown that the areca palm which produces betel-nut is a native of Malaysia, but is widely distributed in a large crescent region to the north west of Australia. It includes Tanzania and Madagascar in East Africa, the entire Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia Indonesia, the Philippines, Formose, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and as far as the island of Tikopia and the other Melanesian Islands. Of the four species of the palm only one, areca catechu, produces edible nuts. It is estimated that some two hundred million people throughout the region indulge in the custom of chewing betel-nut, using a basic recipe of three ingredients - the areca nut, lime and betel-pepper. The three are chewed together which results in the chewer swallowing or spitting out red coloured liquid, a very common sight in Papua New Guniea markets. People throughout Papua New Guinea gain a small cash income by selling betel-nut through sales on the streets, in the markets or from stalls outside villages along the highways. With the advent of roads from the coastal betel-nut growing areas into the highlands, an increasing number of people are involved. So much so for that brief introduction.

Why do people chew betel-nut?

One would normally ask, why do people chew betel-nut? Often it is the stranger who is curious to know why people chew betel-nut. You are likely to get various answers from different people. I put this question to some people, both young and old. Surprisingly enough there were common agreements. Space does not allow me to put down all the responses, but the following are answers that often emerged -

* I chew betel-nut because it makes me active and want to work hard.
* It wards off cold in the night.
* I chew betel-nut because it releases the tensions within me. To me it is a tension reliever or sedative.
* It keeps me awake, e.g. when I am with some people and my eyes signal to have some rest, I'm wide awake when I chew betel-nut.
* It is a custom of my people and I am proud to belong to my people.
* I participate in the life of my people and their practices and betel-nut chewing is one of these practices.
* It enables me to share in the friendship and fellowship with others.
* Beer and cigarettes are for the white people and betel-nut is for me, a Papua New Guinean.
* It gives me strength and happiness.
* Share it with a stranger and learn a little bit about him/her.

The list could be added to, but may be it is enough to give us an idea of how the people of Papua New Guinea regard betel-nut chewing and sharing.

Reaction from the medical profession

How does the medical profession react to chewing betel-nut"? Comparing it with smoking we may ask if betel-nut chewing is a health hazard. No direct link has been proved between smoking and lung cancer, though medical evidence point to the increased risk; similarly betel-nut chewing has been linked with mouth cancer. Certainly mouth cancer is the most common malignant disease in Papua New Guinea, occuring mainly in the coastal regions where betel-nut is grown. In an article in the Post Courier (Papua New Guinea national newspaper) Friday 31 August 1979, Dr. J. S. Niblet is stated to have claimed: "It is well

recognised in this country by medical authorities that betel-nut and lime chewing carry long-term cancer hazards as well as long-term dental problems." However, while recognizing the long-term dangers, the Cancer Relief Society does not intend to mount a large anti-betel-nut campaign. Like the anti-smoking campaigns in other countries, they feel it would have alimited effect. "We appreciate that betel-nut chewing is a vital cultural habit in Papua New Guinea. Rather than attempting to stop it, our message is to move towards a safer betel-nut chewing, that is, reducing or leaving out lime."

Their warning to the chewers is: beware of the dangers of mouth cancer. Report sores inside the mouth which do not heal quickly to the nearest doctor or health worker. So one can see the consequences of chewing betel-nut. Is that so important? It surely is, but not for the present discussion. One can begin to recognize the medical evidences and be aware of the dangers involved in it. You can argue whether their evidences are based on facts or assumptions. I am not in a position to give answers. It is up to the individual either to accept or reject it.

What is the significance of betel-nut in a Papua New Guinea Context?

Betel-nut implies sharing, sharing with another person, with a group and with a community. People always share either in big ways or small ways. Whatever the item is, if given and received by another person, sharing has taken place. Betel-nut is one small way in which people share. Betel-nut is placed in the centre of the house or hung to welcome guest. In many villages it is the first thing placed in the middle of the meeting or singsing. It plays a very important role in gatherings of people as a sign of fellowship and acceptance of the other party into the group. A person identifies him/herself with the group by participating in the sharing process. In such a process, the person becomes part of that particular group. There is a sense of belonging to the group. This has great significance in the lives of the people of Papua New Guinea.

A Port Moresby city councillor who led moves within Port Moresby to lift the ban on betel-nut chewing during office hours, regards it as a harmless stimulant rather than a drug, "something that gives a lift if you feel drowsy". He confirms that one of his colleagues believes that the City Council could not get through meetings without it. "At the Council meetings, it is always there on the table. If we run out, drivers are sent for more."

The sharing and offering of betel-nut is often a standard act for formal greetings, for consolidating partnership, concluding negitiations, and making peace settlements following clan warfare. It is used at festivities such as weddings and feasts.

A friend told me a story of how he established a friendship with someone whom he had never met before. He was on his way to visit relatives in another village. On this particular morning he had walked many miles, and the sun was very hot. He was walking past a house when he heard a voice, "Why not stop by for a drink of water before you continue on your journey?" He thought to himself, "Surely that man must have a heart." So he accepted the invitation with a grateful heart, and joined the man and his wife who were sitting under the mango tree near their house. They formally greeted each other and the visitor sat down to join them. He was offered betel-nut to mark their time together, which undoubtedly was the beginning of their friendship. He was fed, then rested for a little while, said good-bye to the couple and continued on his way. Since then, every time he walks past the house, he stops over for a little rest, drink of water, some betel-nut, and continues his journey.

People often say, when inviting someone, "Come in and chew some betel-nut." That does not mean that every time you are invited you are offered betel-nut. But that does mean, "come and eat or drink something." It has not only become an expression to use when inviting a guest for a short conversation, but a sign of fellowship, of accepting another person, giving a greater sense of belonging to the household. This sense of belonging will gradually spread to the relatives and to the people of the community.

In many parts of Papua New Guinea at meetings in the villages, betel-nut is shared. The sharing of betel-nut among Papua New Guinean is so common that it surpasses in frequency the exchange of greetings and cups of tea and coffee in western culture. As has been said, it is a very important item in feasts and celebrations; people never forget betel-nut when they are making preparations for singsings and feasts. Maybe beer is to a western party what betel-nut is to a Papua New Guinean party. That does not mean that they both have the same influence on the person's brain. Alcohol does have a very great influence on the brain but betel-nut does not make one get drunk although some people have said it does. But the idea of welcoming the guests and sharing with them the joy of the night or the time is very significant. It is a sign of belonging to one another. This does not imply that every Christian ought to chew betel-nut. That is precisely not my argument or the intention of this paper. Every Christian is free to choose what is right for his/her body. They can be on either side and argue for or against chewing betel-nut. Whether it is good or bad for Christians to chew betel-nut is entirely a personal judgement. What I am trying to raise is the matter of values involved in chewing betel-nut. These of course can be considered in the light of the Christian faith and the understanding of what the Bible offers. And that is where we turn to next.

Biblical understanding of fellowship

Koinonia is a word frequently employed by the Apostles to describe the essential character of the church. The English translation is "fellowship", which is quite inadequate to carry the full meaning of the word. The New Testament employs it in several ways that give varying shades of meaning to the pattern of experience the early church had in koinonia. Some passages seem to use the word to describe the close spiritual relationship between the believers and God, either through the person of Christ or through the Holy Spirit.

In Paul's benediction in 2 Corinithians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the (koinonia) fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all," the familiar word is used. We find in Philippians 2:1-2, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation (koinonia) in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being full accord and one mind," - here a more active word being used.

In 1 John 1:3 the term is widened to describe the spiritual unity with God and also with one another: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship (koinonia) with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." We also find passages where the writer uses the word to indicate the common life of the community of believers only. In Acts 2:42, at the end of the account of Pentecost, it is written of the new church, "And they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and prayers."

In the New Testament, koinonia seems to be comprehensive description of the unique life of the community of believers. It is a community that is closely and personally interdependent, but deriving its life from the amazing power of God that is the Holy Spirit. It fundamentally seems to mean "participation in something in which others also participate." Koinonia was a recognizable togetherness that people felt in their whole being, their minds and bodies. This togetherness was there only because they felt the reality of God having an effect upon their minds and physical beings. Koinonia as described in the early church is very different from the practices of today, especially in western Christianity which tends to be individualistic.

Unique life of the community

In almost all communities throughout the world, its people have something in common, something special for that particular community unique to the life they live. It tells something about the uniqueness of that community. The way they express this uniqueness is through the life they live.

The uniqueness of the life of a Christian community is that it is a sharing community. A Christian community can be identified by its sharing, fellowship and love. Sharing implies participating in something in which others also participate, this being a principle on which the Christian community is founded. Those who belong to the Christian community are faced with the challenges of sharing and participating in the life and ministry of the community.

In the Melanesian culture the idea of sharing and belonging together are not strangers. They are part of our life and being, and it would be totally wrong to say that these were introduced by the missionaries to the people. The sense of sharing and belonging together as a people is one on which many Melanesian communities are based.

One of the ways in which these elements are expressed is by the sharing of betel-nut in many gatherings, meetings, feasts and singsings. I personally see these as values in our culture and they are very significant in our understanding of and faith in him (Jesus Christ) who formed our communities to be. The custom of betel-nut sharing involves koinonia; its value is seen and expressed in fellowship. It is a custom which can reflect Christian attitudes.

With betel- nut sharing people sit in a circle (it is Motu, my custom, at least) - a significant shape for communication and fellowship. It creates a group feeling, but more than this, it is a design for a shared relationship. Offering betel-nut can break down barriers. It is a point of contact, and more than that, it can be used as an introduction for more serious discussion and debate. A difficult or an awkward situation can be introduced more easily if the persons concerned are sharing betel-nut and overcoming initial tensions that might exist.

The accepted custom that you can approach anyone and request some lime or pepper builds a relationship which normally might be ignored. Here is a point of contact and a readymade talking point. The custom seems to be that to refuse a request is impolite. And here is a golden opportunity for one to share the gospel message with another person.

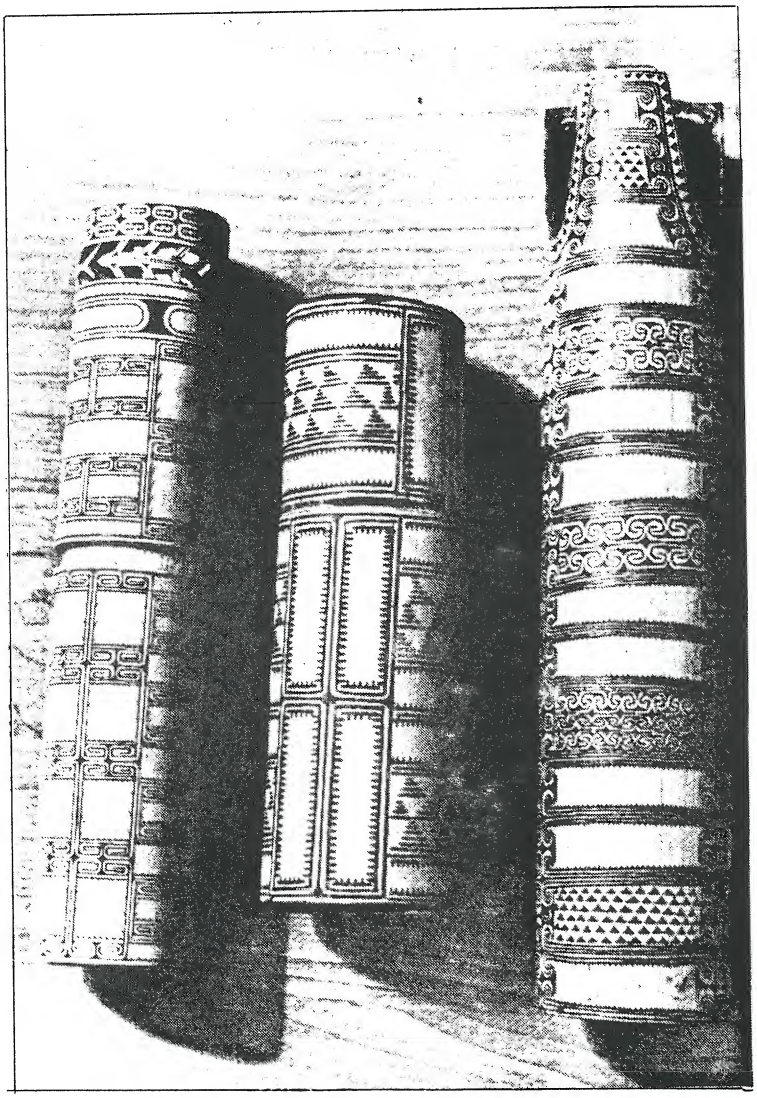
Thus, "What has culture to do with evangelism?" This was the question raised at the Bantok Conference on "Salvation Today". And the answer given was, "Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Jesus Christ."

Conclusion

Many missionaries who came to share their lives with us in proclaiming the good news haven't had the time to reflect much on the significance of betel-nut chewing and sharing, in relation

to fellowship, acceptance and belonging together in a community. This I think indicates ignorance of the life style which is of significant value to the faith and life of my people in Papua New Guinea in Jesus Christ. Because of ignorance and unwillingness to do some reflection on certain customs, the whole idea of betel-nut sharing and chewing has been brushed aside and has been labeled "bad", "unhealthy".

I as a Papua New Guinean feel that we need to be urged to think in terms of Melanesians and we need the desire to express Christian doctrines in relevant indigenous terms. However, the urge and the desire is not to create a Melanesian Christianity in alienation from the Christian contributions of other cultures. It is to have the urge and the initiatve to restore, to bring back to life what was deliberately or unconsciously removed from the essence of our being in the process of preaching the gospel to us by the missionaries on the shores of our islands. We have so much to offer from our islands to other islands of the world.



SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON BETEL-NUT SHARING AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Step 1: Have a brief introduction to the theme by a selected leader, raising some of the concerns of people about using betel-nut, and introducing the issue of fellowship (koinonia) which is associated with the use of betel-nut. The leader should have read the article by Nou Oru on "Betel-nut Sharing and Christian Fellowship". In his introduction he should raise questions rather than give answers.

Step 2: Have a role play. The setting could be in a house where friends have gathered. They talk together.

The characters.

(a) An older man who is in favour of the use of betel-nut, believing it does little harm and creates good fellowship in church and community.

(b) A nurse who is uncertain about her attitude, but is worried about health effects of chewing betel-nut.

(c) A woman who is strongly opposed to its use, who thinks it is a "dirty habit".

(d) The village pastor who really believes in it because it helps to create good fellowship, strengthening community relationships, helping to reduce hositiliy and quarrels.

Step 3: Discuss the role play in small groups, thinking about the points made by each of the four characters. (A person should be appointed at the beginning to record the discussion and report the main points to the whole group.) Consider these questions: What are some of the criticisms of using betel-nut? What are some of the values?

Step 4: Make reports to the whole group and have general discussion.

Step 5: In the same small groups have a brief study of the following biblical passages, each group having one passage to study. For each passage ask the question, "What does this passage say about Christian fellowship?"

2 Corinthians 8:1-15
Mark 14:12-26
Luke 4:16-22
1 John 1:1-4
Philippians 2:3-8
2 Corinthians 13:13

Come together and ask each group to report, first reading the allotted passage or passages aloud and then giving important points about the meaning of fellowship found in the reading.

Step 6: Plan action steps about the enrichment of Christian fellowship in churches and the wider community, identifying the place of chewing betel-nut in creating fellowship.

(These suggestions for group work may be too long for one session. They could be used in an extended session of say three hours, or for two separate sessions, with the second giving special attention to the biblical passages.)

Resources

Article by Nou Oru. Biblical references. Local leaders.

Note: People belonging in various countries of Polynesia may adapt this study to the use of kava.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Michael Aike

Introduction

Christianity is not so very old in the Solomon Islands. Other places with longer Christian experience and influence are becoming "less Christian", while places with only short history of Christianity are trying to adapt or incarnate so that the Christian faith will not be considered foreign. Today one has to be cautious even about using terms such as "pagan", "Christian" and or "non-Christian". God is of all peoples. All receive his inward call, urging them for a special communion with him, but still free to accept or reject the inward message of call.

Malaita

I come from Malaita, an island where some "pagans" are still living, members of the "church of the devout pagan." There is no such thing as "pure pagan", just as there does not exist "pure Christian", but deep in the hearts of all men and women there exists already an inward religious experience. In my village there are two "pagan" men who said they would become Christians if Christians, members of the "church of the first born"(Heb. 12:23) the Christian church, respect the Christian God in worship and live up to his demands. While there is some truth in this thinking, Christ and his message of salvation is for all. Love of God embraces all. ("God will be all in all". 1 Cor. 5:28) "Unconscious Christianity" is not enough; it must be fulfilled perfectly in the one mediator, Jesus Christ. Conversion depends on God. It is important to recognize what is already good, present in our brothers and sisters. When "pagans" embrace Christianity, they can only put us to shame as we see them praying and attending church worship and services. In the Roman Catholic church we had used terms which were hurtful and far from being Christian. For example in my language area of South Malaita, the word "opa pono" literally means and refers to "heathens", whose "hearts or bellies are shut", those who live in "darkness" in opposition to and could not be measured up to Christian ideals and practices.

A custom "opa pono" priest

One of those "opa pono" was my father, a hard pagan priest for most of his life. He became a Christian and lived as a Christian for another twenty five years. He died at eighty five. He had offered many pagan sacrifices to our pagan ancestors on our behalf for our support and defence. In front of our leafhouse was tied to the main beam a dry coconut fruit. In a small bamboo container tied to the coconut fruit were kept parts of bones and some teeth of the ancestors. When my father felt we were threatened by unkown forces, he would get a stick and violently tap and beat the coconut fruit, as though to wake up

the ancestors to come to our aid. He would shake all over in a trance. After he had uttered many incantations and felt assured of an answer for our security and safety, he would calm down but still with tears in his eyes would say, "All will be all right". As kids (only three of us in the family) we did not fully understand what he was doing. As I grew up he told me I would have to inherit all that he was doing in regard to the ancestors in order to be strong and effective in life. In a word, he wanted me to be a true "pagan priest", able to offer sacrifices to our ancestors. I am sure he was not thinking of me becoming a Roman Catholic priest, an idea he opposed till just before his conversion to the Christian faith.

"Solomon Islands is a Christian country." This statement is often repeated in the Solomon Islands by many - politicians, church people, towns people and the rural folk. It all depends on how one explains the statement. In numbers, yes, we are a Christian country. A closer look reveals all is not that true. The statement cannot be used to cover up our general indifference to Lotu and Christian worship; our self-complacency, or,"no worries!", or "nothing can happen to us!" However, despite this general attitude, there are many Solomon Islanders in every level of our society who are good, dedicated and responsible Christians.

Many Solomon Islanders go to the Christian services with varying degrees of faith if I might say it that way. Many go to church worship out of obligation. It is a commandment to worship God especially on Sundays. Many people, too, go to church services not only because it is an obligation to do so, but because out of love, through faith, they just want to go whether it is an obligation or not.

Some people are church-goers in towns, but back to their villages they stop going. The opposite is also true. Those who devoutly go to church services in villages, do not bother when in towns despite the "one talk system" which extends into urban areas and is an asset in strengthening the group. There are many too, who go to worship wherever they are, whether in towns or rural areas. Some, when elected politicians in the Government system, think that religion and politics should not mix, using this as a defence mechanism to avoid facing up to the injustices which the Christian church must uncover and face, despite all opposition. While religion and politics should not interfere with each other, they could very much help each other. Christianity must influence politics, and in this regard the Solomon Islands Christian Association is a powerful watch-dog. (Ps. 33:12; Prov. 28:12; Prov. 28:5)

Ecumenism in the Solomon Islands is a blessing from your God. It was providential that ecumenism was well established before Independence, a great contributing factor, though late in coming, in uniting the Solomon Island people. Gone are days when we used to argue and abuse one another as to who was right and who had the true religion! None of us had realized that no group has or will ever have monopoly of God whom we all worship in faith.

So although our society publicly preaches that we are a Christian country, this does not necessarily mean that individual behaviour reflects the same. One has to be cautious, "a Christian country" could be also the most impoverished, a horrible example of economic cultural, and religious poverty!

Community worship

In practice worship begins in the home. It may begin in a house, a leaf-house or one with an iron roof. Worship and Christian daily living are one. They both do not end inside the church, but continue outside in daily life as far as it is possible. Today for a life of Christian witness, a sign is important. In pagan worship too, the daily cultural life of a group was not separated from worship. The application of worship to life did not end on the pagan altar stones on Malaita, Guadalcanal or Makira, but coninued through concrete life situations. For example the awareness of the ever-presence of the ancestors explained why the rain came, the sun shone, the rivers flooded, the seas were rough, the gardens grew, why sickness came, and caused death, why healing took place. The pagan concept of the ancestors providing or not providing for tne needs of the community is not different from our Christian belief that nothing happens without God's knowledge and that he provides us with all our needs (Mat. 6:25-33).

Values, symbols, memory

There used to be a general and real fear of paganism in the Solomon Islands. Many had wondered whether the name religion could ever be given to pagan beliefs and practices. When paganism was condemned in the earlier periods of Christianity, every other thing in the culture went with it. Today there is "a look back" into the culture to see what things are important, for example, values, symbols and memory.

Values involve the worth we give to things, ideas, actions and even our experiences. For example the bride price in the Solomon Islands has the value of binding a marriage, though today it tends to be commercialized. Symbols tell us about realities which are hidden. We have to look a little deeper to find the meaning. Plenty of shell money and head-gear on a man on Malaita would tell that he is a chief with prestige and standing.

Memory has the meaning today of preserving and keeping the relics ofthe ancestors. Some Christians say they want to keep them "just for memory" of their dead ones. In fact some do worship these relics, or keep them in order to bring good luck in fishing and hunting. The value underneath this practice is the belief in the life after death. One might say that the cultural values are the cultural doctrines of faith. If this is so we ought to keep them. I have not heard the belief in the Resurrection being denied in the Solomon Islands. The Christian church and the customs still have to be deeply involved in serious dialogue. If they do not, the whole of the Christian religion will still be considered as

alien. The Africans reject "adaptation", a word much used during the excitement after Vatican 2. For them the theology of adaptation implies outside domination, superiority complex, one sidedness; for them the question is: who adapts to whom? They prefer the theology of Incarnation.

Guadalcanal, Markaruk village

March 1972 found me at Makaruka, Weather Coast of Guadalcanal. I stayed in this village for two years among the adherents of the Moro Custom Movement. In the early 1960s, Makaruka was a strong-hold of the Movement. Moro, the founder, is now in his early fifties. "He died and after three days rose again". He became the messiah of his people. He had many dreams after which he wanted to re-discover, rescue and record the history of Guadalcanal, the origins of its people, animals, trees, mountains, valleys and rivers, most particularly the customs or the culture which the people felt were rapidly slipping away and out from beneath their feet. The men wore strings (kabilato) and the women grass skirts (sada). They had refused to wear western clothes. Moro was baptized a catholic, Felix by name, but was never properly instructed in the Christian faith. We used to baptize people left and right, believing they must be saved at all cost. Makaruka was a big Roman Catholic village, but perhaps was never a Christian village in the sense that a missionary would have liked to see.

Missionaries and Government officials were suspects in the eyes of the Movement, rightly or wrongly thought of as only being there to destroy the customs. Some people thought that the Movement must be destroyed at all costs to make way for Christianity to thrive once again, but the Movement stuck hard and had refused to bow down to anyone. It also rejected advice, as accepting advice would mean bowing down to domination from outside. Makaruka was not left to itself though. In 1971, one of our priests had offered himself to stay with the people in the village. The people had welcomed him though still with suspicion and they had built him a leaf-house. He was really for the people, trying to help them in every way he could, but he too had to leave.

Government involvement

The former British administration was also confused, but prudent and cautious enough not to use force. Rather, it had employed the age-old idea of benign neglect. The people were left in peace as long as they were harmless. To keep the peace, the police force occasionally roamed the Weather Coast to put down any coming-up troubles. The situation was tense, but the people were never hostile or violent. In fact Moro, the leader of the Movement, had preached love, respect and co-operation,

virtues needed for any worshipping community. Moro had also encouraged his people to enter socio-economic development. The people had planted a hundred acre coconut plantation and worked on a project of a hundred pigs for marketing purposes.

The period at Makaruka was a challenging one, but I found there was no need to condemn the whole Movement. For sure there were good as well as bad things in it. The Movement was a "sit in strike "against unbalanced development in our own society. It was against the Government because the people were not getting their piece of the cake, against the church because as the people had said sometimes; "the church had destroyed our customs". In reaction, the customs had destroyed the church at Makaruka.

Christian worship at Makaruka

The period at Makaruka had taught me only slowly that the people needed to regain their self-respect and self-confidence. Fear of change had also stopped further progress. To go forward meant making great sacrifices in the cultural, social and religious attitudes. These were too heavy to bear. The customs had undergone tremendous changes since the first contacts with Christianity. To stand still meant nowhere to go, stagnation. This meant the Custom Movement had become very artificial. To worship the ancestors again and seek the cultural warmth were no longer possible or comfortable especially for the young. The whole Movement had become a defence mechanism - "You did not help us, please stay out".

To worship the Chrsitian God who had displaced the role of the ancestors meant "bowing to the outside".

"Those who captured us told us to sing; they told us to entertain them: 'Sing us a song about Zion' How can we sing to the Lord in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137:3-4). The despairing people in the Babylon captivity could not sing or entertain in a pagan and strange land. The Makaruka people, captives of social, cultural, economic and religious changes, could not sing or entertain a "foreign religion", much less worship a "foreign God", who had captured and displaced their ancestoral worship.

So in a situation like that at Makaruka, Christian worship was not easy. For some, Christian worship did not exist. Sundays were the same; work, hunting, fishing, playing but no praying. We used to have services in a class room. Some people had always come to services but not others. Perhaps a despairing people had no interest in liturgical celebrations and Christian worship.

The Chrlstian church had done some damage to the customs, but bad past records could not be simply played back, for in the early days of missionary activity in the Solomon Islands there was no other approach than to hit hard at the customs. Christianity had to be embraced at all costs. Much dialogue and spiritual reconciliation are needed today.

Makaruka "piro-man"

The "piro-man" is a "poison man" who is able to cast spells on people. He does this by taking bits of food, a hair or a finger nail of his enemy, putting them in the mouth of a frog which lives in a custom sacred place (peo). When the frog shuts its mouth, the death of the victim is sealed and nothing can be done unless the custom medicine man finds out and cures the victim. For sure, sickness is surrounded by ritual.

Omca Gastro-entirits hit Makaruka village and in a week four children, aged three or four, died one after another. It was believed that piro-man had caused the deaths of these children and there was nothing that could be done, despite modern medicine, which the people had refused to be given to their children. It was not a nice time going to and from the cemetary. The situation seemed hopeless. The doctor came to our rescue, and prevented more deaths by giving the whole village preventive drugs. Perhaps at the time when we needed God most, the situation did not help us to worship together.

Experiments - Palm Sunday and Yam Sunday

Palm Sunday is celebrated in honour of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. This Sunday opens up Holy Week which ends up with the glorious Easter Sunday. Christians celebrate the redeeming acts of Christ in His Paschal mysteries. Understanding of Palm Sunday comes to us from the four gospels. (Mat. 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-40. John 12:12-19). So the Feast of Easter is very important to Christians. It is a feast of hope, bringing back to us the history of salvation. It is full of liturgical celebrations and festivities. It is a time of happiness and greetings and getting together of families and communities, to pray and worship the God of salvation. In Palm Sunday liturgies, branches of trees and palms are used. This is biblical.

Yam is an important crop in the Solomon Islands. No other root crop is surrounded by so much ritual and even magic. This was more true in the past. Yams could only grow if the blessings of the ancestors were invoked. A bad harvest indicated that the rituals were not done properly or that the ancestors were not pleased. The man with the biggest piles of yams at a feast had power, prestige and a big celebration. Yams are seasonal and a very delicate crop to take care of. In the past, the first yams from a harvest were always given to the pagan priest to bless and open the season for the new harvest. Custom yam rituals are easily adapted to Christian worship. First yams are heaped up on Sundays near the altar for God's blessing and for a good harvest.

Yams have a deep ceremonial and cultural meaning. Realizing this, we had a procession with yams on a Palm Sunday. All the families came with yams and after the procession all the yams were blessed.

When the service ended the people carried back the yams to be eaten. They thought the ceremony was very meaningful. Yams of course are not biblical. They could not be grown in Palestine, but the value and the worth the people in the Solomon Islands give to yams makes them mean more than branches of trees and palms to signify victory.

Calicoes and kabilatos

It was affirmed at Makaruka that if the yams were to grow to good harvest, the people had to wear custom clothes - kiabilatos and sadas when working the gardens for yams. If the people wore custom clothes for the gardens to grow, why not use them for church services? In Papua New Guinea I saw people using tangets for church services. So I told the people if they wanted to wear custom clothes for Sunday services, they could do so. Not many came with custom clothes, because, as many said, they had to wear western clothes for the Lotu because the church came from the outside and not from the culture. This experimentation was not so important. It was an attempt to show the people that anything of worth in the customs the church also respects, and can use.

Good Friday

Walking under a coffin is a sign of sorrow, respect and farewell in some areas of the Solomon Islands. On a Good Friday I have invited people to walk under the cross, held high by two men. This was full of meaning to the people.

The generation gap and worship

There is a critical generation gap growing up in the Solomon Islands between the old and the young. Almost eighty percent of the population are young people. Much criticism is levelled at the young for not caring about prayer and worship. The old say the young like to play the guitar and turn on the radio while they should be worshipping. The word "liu" (wandering without aim) has become a status. You are something if you are a "liu". However, many young people are very committeed and want to take responsibility which is not allowed to them by the elders. Old people, too, do not understand the young and their problems. To force them to follow all the customs does not work. The old people have much good advice from the culture to offer the young. One thing is clear, the old and the young are going to live together in the same community and be involved in its activities. Both can offer many good things to build up a worshipping community. Many young people are committed pastoral workers, and their complaints are that the old people hardly want any change of attitudes. Social and cultural changes make things difficult for both sections. One solution is to involve old and young in leadership and custom courses, to bring out their problems and seek solutions together.

Ancestral Worship

Ancestral worship and veneration are not necessarily the same, but both ideas were very much inter-commected in pre-Christian times in the Solomon Islands. In the past one could not venerate the ancestors without worshipping them and vice versa. Today some "Christians" in the Solomon Islands venerate their ancestors, but do not worship them in the sense of offering them pagan sacrifices: pigs, oppossums, birds or puddings. Some do still both worship and venerate their ancestors. They also go to Church services and worship God. I know in my village that the catechist, a good and dedicated man in church activities in the community, had to offer a pig to his ancestor because his child was sick for a long time despite medical treatment. The child finally got better and the community only learned later that he had offered a custom sacrifice. The community said the child was well again because of the prior medical treatment. He said all was well due to the sacrifice he had offered. I was surprised at the story, but not shocked. I did not believe that this good man would again offer a pagan sacrifice of any sort. Such actions are not so uncommon in the Solomon Islands.

Ancestral veneration

The example I gave of my father having the dry coconut fruit in front of our house with some bones and teeth of the ancestors is veneration, but indeed very much connected with pagan sacrifice, because it was from these relics that he had to find out whether a sacrifice was to be offered in times of sickness and or disaster. Veneration could be compared to the Christian cult of saints who through the example of their lives had upheld Christian moral ideals of their communities. These saints could be called our Christian ancestors. They command our respect, honour and veneration, but not worship. God alone is to be worshipped.

Who were the ancestors?

The ancestors must not be understood as "pagan devils". Simply they were not and now are not. Ancestors were once living persons who had reputation and respect which gave them power among the living not simply because they are now dead, but because though dead they are still living and having influence in people's lives.

It was social and material success, community fame, that made the ancestors immortal. It was because they were generous, strong in war to protect the community, rich enough to help relatives, friends and those outside with gifts, that people sought their advice. In times of crisis they were the first to stand in front of the community. These qualities made the ancestors objects of cult and veneration. Those who had never enjoyed

the social approval of the community have never become the objects of worship and veneration. We might say that it was fear rather than love that was the main point in old ancestoral worship. Fear however, does not necessarily drive out all of love.

Ancestor worship is not accepted in the place of God, but it has value as symbolic of filial, cultural and family piety or veneration. It shows personal relationships between peoples' loved ones now dead but still living. It shows a religious recognition of life after death. It shows that ancestors are contact channels, keepers of peace, stability and progress in the community. It shows a communion and relationship between the living and the dead. We Christians have all these too in and with Jesus. To recognize this is to baptize the culture itself. So the whole culture of the Solomon Islands can be seen as valid. Certain cases that run counter to Jesus' teaching must be rejected and or purified. This is important in the approach of incarnating Christian worship so that we will not be "throwing away the baby with bath water". Melanesian theology can develop through preaching and teaching, linking the Christian message with value-symbols, not simply telling custom stories. Our culture is a complex system which embodies and codifies the behaviour of the people and is very much connected with the whole way of life. (Heb. 2:14-18, Heb.4.15) Christ is not foreign to us or the culture.

Following a self study by the Catholic Church in the Solomon Islands, two recommendations from the self study were included:

1. We recommend that whatever signs in our culture or custom, be it movement, gestures, dances, dresses, drums, shells, etc. which isn't in our Christian liturgy, be put into our Christian liturgy in the Solomon Islands.

2. We recommend that every year a special day of prayer be set aside for our Solomon Island ancestors (48 for, 4 against).

Church building in custom shape

Recently I paid a visit to one of our villages. The people had build a nice leaf-church in the shape of custom feast-houses. One man had carved into one of the posts a statue of the Blessed Virgin; other posts had some saints and angels. Carved into the main post is Christ the crucified. This is very meaningful; Christ is the centre of all. In this area, custom houses have carvings representing the male and female sexes, and in these houses were (are kept) bones of the ancestors. We had a service in the new church and afterwards, the catechist came to me privately and told me that in the custom house not far from the church were bones of their great ancestor. He asked me whether to throw them away or destroy them. I did not know what to answer him, but after we had talked together, a decision was made not to destroy them, to leave them alone but not to offer sacrifice to them. I thought that giving thanks to this ancestor and the

and the people's belief in him had led them to believing in God. But no ancestor is above Christ, the greatest of all ancestors. All ancestors had lived because of him and none had lived without his redeeming act.

Christian and pagan prayer

The ideal Christian community is one which worships and prays together in fellowship. Such a community models itself on Jesus, the Risen Lord, and celebrates his life. It is open to the gifts of the Spirit. It shares the Word of God and tries to live the faith in Jesus in daily life. In this way the community gets its strength from Jesus in worship and prayer. Well said, but the ideal is never achieved here on earth, and Solomon Islands is no paradise either. Many despair of prayer because results expected do not seem to come.

The word Marumaru is used on San Cristobal for custom prayer. Other islands and language groups in the Solomon Islands have their own words and usage. Marumaru is a form of prayer with words some times not understandable calling for "mena" (power) to heal, make the gardens grow, the rain to come etc. It is not used to poison people. The power (mena) is called upon from the ancestors. This prayer never despairs of a result coming. Christians should learn from this to be persistant in prayer.

One important adaptation must be mentioned. The custom form of prayer has been baptized. Our Chrsitian shared prayer is in this form, spontaneous and directed to God for all our needs. It is interesting that older people are very good and spontaneous in shared prayer. They can talk and pray for a long time. Generally this is not so with the young. In the Christian church we also have different forms of prayer which are used for various needs.

The marumaru can also be understood as "pagan blessings" for many things. When Christian blessings are used to bless gardens or canoes etc, the good ancestors could be invoked also, including them in the same prayer. This is a good adaptation. In the same way we call upon the Christian saints for help because we believe they are with God and are powerful because of him.

Solomon Islands regained independence

Politics can affect Christian worship, but worship should also influence politics. Solomon Islands regained independence from colonial Britain on July 7, 1978, after eighty years of colonial experience. Colonialism had its strengths and weaknesses.

We were "born again" and we are only seven years old. But it could be said that somehow Solomon Islanders were quick to learn some things necessary to manage their own affairs and again look after themselves. Three things had contributed to shape up the peaceful transition to independence; the culture as the base, colonialism with its "harsh rules", and the Christian churches with total, unmatched education. This education is evident in churches' man-power in the persons of Bishops, priests, pastors, and Christian leaders to guide the churches in Christian life and worship.

Independence did not come as a surprise. The high-lights of the celebrations included praying together for peace, prosperity and unity for the new country. In many denominational and combined church services, the blessings of the Lord were obvious. Jesus was here before, is ever here now and will ever be here. In prayer and worship Jesus is more present with his people. "For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them."

Towards a conclusion

Many things which I have written are based on my experiences on three islands; Malaita, Guadalcanal, and San Christobal, where I am now working. It is my belief that God alone brings about conversion in people and that without faith and conversion, Christian worship is indeed empty. I have never yet come across Christian worship that is pure. Perhaps such does not exist, certainly not in the Solomon Islands. In a word, Christian worship is involved with many human and custom things, ancestor worship included. Makaruka experience had taught me that a recognition of what is good and already there in our brothers and sisters and in our culture is important. The incarnation of Our Saviour is so "foolish" that sometimes I wonder why should people accept it. It is the God "of the crude staff" of the Old Testament who is also Our Saviour. There is nothing profane for us, except sin, if only we know how to see. (Heb. 4:14-15.) Christ was not afraid to take a low status. He stepped down from being equal to God into our earthly flesh. He took the form of a servant. (Phil. 2:7). So the Christian church should not fear to incarnate itself with courage and prudence into the Pacific cultures. The essence of the Gospel remains important. Christianity is neither new nor old.

Readings

Aylward Shorter: African Christian Theology

E. Schillbeeckx, O.P.: Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God

Walbert Buhlmann: The Chosen Peoples

E. Schillbeeckx, O.P.: New Ministries

William Davenport and Bulbun Coker: II Moro Movement on Guadalcanal
The Journal of the Polynesian Society Volume 76 No. 2, June 1967

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Step 1: A leader or a small group may introduce the session on worship. A brief statement or panel discussion could open up issues about traditional and Christian worship, and the need for a Pacific way in worship, less influenced by western European culture. An aim of the session is to understand similarities and differences between custom and Christian worship and to make Christian worship less foreign, belonging more to the people and their culture.

Step 2: Divide into small groups to discuss the questions:

(a) In what ways did people worship in your country before the coming of Christian missionaries? What were the main purposes of worship?

(b) Identify similarities and differences between Christian and traditional worship. What should be retained from the old, what revived, but "baptised" into the Christian way; what should be thrown away, discarded?

Step 3: Receive reports from groups and make a chart on a blackboard.

Traditional	Christian

Step 4: After the chart has been completed, ask people in twos or threes where they sit to talk about these questions:

* What changes in Christian worship could take place, which would be true to the Christian gospel and be closely related to the local culture?

* What new elements from the modern situation could be used?

* Should there be prayers to ancestors?

List the following assignments and others that may be suggested, and let people choose on which they would like to work.

(a) Plan a worship service using traditional music, art forms, symbolic acts, etc.

(b) Write a new hymn using local references and a local tune.

(c) Write new prayers for special occasions and needs.

Step 5: Report results to whole group, may be making use of some of the work done in step 4.

Resources

Article by Michael Aike.

Worship, the Pacific Way by John Garrett and John Mavor, available from Lotu Pacifica Productions, P.C.C., Box 208, Suva, Fiji.

Biblical references to worship and Prayer books of various denominations. Hymn books.

A HEATHEN SPEAKS

Churchy, churchy, listen to me,
Your members speak to me
About a strange Lord.
Strange God, who are you?
Show me your face.

Churchy, churchy, listen to me,
Your members told me
A strange news -
News God created me
Show me your hand.

Churchy, churchy, teach me
Properly to know this strange God.
Put Him in my heart,
Make Him clear to me
That I may know Him.

Churchy, churchy, change me.
Ancestor spirit is my reality,
I see Him in stones,
I see Him in trees,
I see Him in skulls.

Churchy, churchy, show me
The strange God.
Where will I see Him?
Or would I touch Him?
Where will I hear Him?

O man, the strange God
The God of joy, peace and love,
He is in all our lives,
Politics, economics,
The strange God lives in all,
He lives in you.

Leslie Fugui

(From Twenty-four Poems of the Solomon Islands.
University of the South Pacific, January 1977).

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN MELANESIAN CULTURE

Leslie Fugui

Introduction

As long as mankind exists in the world marriage will never stop. It will be a growing and a continuous process. Although in Melanesia marriage involves the community they have also understood the fact that the true consummation of marriage is a personal affair between the individual couples. It is the couple who have the satisfaction, it is the couple who must fulfil the marriage requirements and it is the couple who will be actually living together and making a family and a home.

Every normal person in Melanesia, because of community influence and high expectation, is expected to get married. Only someone who has some mental disorder or physical deformity might not be married. One of the major expectations is child bearing. Women who produce many children are much more respected than others who don't. The children become a resource, and security in the minds of the tribes, families and the parents alike. The children carry the name of the parents and so provide wealth and create social status and recognition of the tribe by others. And of course the more people the tribes have, the more military and political advantages they have. When parents are growing old the children will help them with everything they need. The children rather than money become the security. The weight of security is mainly upon the children. That is why birth control and family planning are very foreign to many families in Melanesia. This point of view and practice creates a lot of tensions when issues of right and wrong are considered today. There is much confusion over the question of what is the will of God and what is the will of the people. Where do the fear and the obstruction come from? It is from the shortage of land, food production and the population explosion that modern thinking dwells upon today. The church's teachings should give new meanings to the people so that new transformation and revitalization can take place. That is what Christian ethics is all about.

Another topic of debate today in Melanesia is the concept of bride price. In Melanesia the form of bride price is in money and frequently the system is very patrilineal. The bridegroom's tribe would buy the girl for their boy, and henceforth the arrangement for the marriage is constantly by the bridegroom's side. Some reasons for brideprice payments differ from area to area. But there are other reasons which are common to all. These involve the commecrial, social and spiritual spheres of life. It is to meet the value and the worth of the bride and the blessings, prosperity and happiness she would bring to the tribe. Frequently the payment is set to suggest a high standard for the bride which she then must fulfil. It is to create a good fear of divorce between the couple. But of course it will place many debts on the newly wedded couples, because they have to refund all the money that was used for the bride price. Also it is a payment reward to the parents for their time of bringing up the daughter.

Incest is forbidden within marriage. To commit this crime is a very serious matter for all people concerned. Its penalty is more serious than that for committing adultery with someone outside the family circle. To stop such a thing from happening, families have many ethnical taboos. Moreover there is also an ethical system about how to relate with the relations within the marriage circle.

One ethical problem regarding breaking of the marital ethical taboos is the problem of compensation. Some Christians believe it is a sinful use of money, and some Christians believe it is not. There are many different opinions and practices in the life of the church.

Marriages are still arranged today in many parts of Melanesia. The reasons for such arranged marriages are based on social, economic and religious factors and on the experience and wisdom of the old, for parents are still highly thought of as part of son-father respect. One of the problems that girls often face is the problem of being forced at times by parents and relatives to marry someone they do not know or want. Then the girl may run away with someone she loves without the consent of the parents.

Significance of marriage in culture and Christianity

In Melanesian culture the man is the boss of the family and to have this work the newly married couple should be with the parents for a few years before they move into their own homes. The mother-in-law helps to teach the daughter-in-law the tribal ethics, behaviour and attitudes as well as other roles of a wife in that family.

The intention of that form of education is, I think, so that the mother would tame the wife to know and to see that the husband is the boss in the family. The newly wed couples have to know their roles and the role of the wife is to be submissive constantly. The sharing of obligations is not very wide or very common, probably because the couples already know what their roles are, hence there is no quarrel about who is doing what.

In Christianity there is a teaching in Genesis 2: 21 concerning the beginning of marriage as interpreted by the Israelites. Many Christians argue that there should be equality and sharing of responsibilities in Christian homes. They have based this argument on the fact that God took the rib from the side of man (Gen. 2: 22). From that time, the man instantly realised and recognised the status of the woman. "Bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh". Gen. 2: 23 Such expressions were an indication of love and not of fear and observance of rules and so on. This form of love relationship is not a vague and confused one, but a love with equal justice and openness which must be seen in all spheres of life. In the New Testament marriage has a high status. We can read this in Ephesians 5: 29-32, which affirms that marriage is an honourable estate instituted of God. We are

told that it signifies to us the mystical union that is between Christ and his church. Jesus said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and the two shall become one." Marriage is ordained by God the creator. Therefore marriage should give glory to God because it is a God given thing by the creation of men and women in his own image.

Adultery has different weights and penalities in the Melanesian frame of reference. In some parts it was believed that should the woman or even the man have committed the sin, someone in the family may die, unless the sin is confessed privately or publicly. This is a religious concept and because of this fear married people should keep to their marriage partners. Socially and legally big compensations of money or even death penalities are involved. Because of the seriousness of the matter where there are many ethical taboos applied, it is considered taboo to walk across a married woman's legs. No one other than the husband should sit on the married woman's bed or enter her bedroom If these taboos are broken, their compensations are not as great as the adultery compensation.

People see the concept of paying such compensations as an indication of settling the matter in peace. Forgiveness and repentance are visible in the form of the compensation.

Christians have confirmed and affirmed very strongly the law, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" in the decalogue (Deut. 5: 18). St. Paul said in 1 Cor. 5:1 that sexual immorality is wrong and again in chapter 7: 2-5 he said that because of human sexual appetite and sexual urges that all people should have their own wives and own husbands. "A man should fulfil his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfil her duty as a wife and each should satisfy the other's needs". It is clear in the creation story in Genesis 1: 27 that God created male and female in his own image, so that they can enjoy each other as wife and husband. It is clear from this passage that our sexuality is not a mistake on God's part or a result of human sin, but a good gift of God. It is therefore to be enjoyed and celebrated. The second chapter of Genesis points to one of the main ways in which human sexuality is to be expressed. For the chapter reaches its climax in the concept of the one flesh union which is presented as the essential meaning of marriage (Gen. 2:24, 25). Both Jesus and Paul go back to this concept of one flesh union when dealing with the meaning of marriage and of the sexual act. In Mark 10: 1-12 Jesus makes it clear that God is actively involved in a genuine one flesh union so that a new unity is created. In 1 Cor. 6:15-17 Paul presents a strong view about one flesh union. I believed such a union constitutes genuine sexual love and true marriage. The power of Christian teaching should penetrate into the culture and analyse the marriage concepts to give new meanings and fulfilments.

For example, the whole meaning of the bride price should be looked into to find out what is applicable to the Christian teaching. Moreover, what is socially good, according to today's way of life should be done. However, it must be done within the interest of the people concerned. The same would be the case with the issue of arranged marriages, and its strengths and weaknesses.

Marriage problems due to social changes in Melanesia*

Social change is growing in the countries of Melanesia. Words like modernisation, civilization, secularization and materialism have become part of development strategies. The changes that are involved have big influences on the social systems and structures of the communities. The changes are so fast, with very few making the development policies. They are of the minority elite and the majority become confused. There is great need for people to understand the concepts in the changes so that they may master their own lives. Those people who have lived in their old ways for many years and who have had some control over their natural environments have found it confusing to adjust to the changes.

To the people who have lived in the tribal villages, change is often due to new ways of communication. They may move away by travelling to other parts to work for money. Very often the companies they work for have no accommodation for married people. The wives are left at home while husbands work in other parts. This separation can continue for many years. Husbands easily commit adultry with women near the plantations and in the towns. They are in the wide world. There is nobody to guide them. To get rid of their fear for the sins they have done they confess privately to the Pastor. The wives also have the urge for sexual relationships but because of the family protection and community pressure they find it hard.

In the past the married were really respected by the community. Nowadays this form of respect has changed because of many social changes. Many married women are now working in offices and other places of work among different men. In some ways the housewives are more respected and thought more highly of than the working wives. I think such a thing has happened because among working men and women divorce occurs. Divorces are very common today, even without any grounds or reasons. The only reason for divorce which the people recognise is if the wife commits adultery. In the case of the husband there is always compensation and the wife will not divorce him. But nowadays there are many reasons for divorces and both the wife and the husband have the same right to sue for divorce.

Divorce and remarriage have an impact on the society nowadays as I have mentioned before. Persons moved away to distant islands or other parts, come to dislike their proper wives and are re-married to others. The same may be true with the other partner and the

possibilities become unlimited. Now this is new to the community because although polygamy existed in the past, the husband always kept the wives with him. The wives were not abandoned by the husband. Therefore the sense of security was still there. Remarriage has caused some social problems between the tribes, the wives, and the children. The relations of the first wife would turn against the relations of the second wife. The same would be true of the wives themselves. The children of the first mother and the children of the second mother especially the boys would have a lot of anti-mother feelings and hatred.

Remarriage has also created a lot of economic problems, especially on the matter of ownership of land. These complications occur between the children of both wives. In the case of matri-lineal tribes the children would inherit properties of the mothers. The conflict often happens within the tribes with a structure. There is constant dispute over who should have the right of the father's properties. The love, the peace and harmony that should be in the family and marriage has turned into hatred and confusion.

Materialism and modernisation which of course involve money, have effects on married people today. Single men are looking for working women whether they are married or not. Because they are young and attractive they easily conquer the married women. The same is of single and young women, who are looking and hunting for the wealthy married men. Every now and then there are problems regarding this matter. The community is weakened because in the past the parents have come out strongly against it. But nowadays it seems that due to materialism the parents also want some financial assistance in this matter. Some married persons who are working in financial jobs steal public money and are put into prison. Many of these people have been in prison for a long time. Due to sexual appetite the married partners have had sexual intercourse outside their marriage. .People who have many material things are the people who have many problems with their marriages. Many people who want to be modern covet the position of people who have many material things.

The moral standards which people of this community have had in the past have been almost destroyed by the materialistic influence. The legal systems, that the community has upheld with its severe punishments, has now been weakened by the introduction of the English laws. The democratic freedom in the British legal system is in contrast to democratic constraint in the Melanesian law or legal system. Married persons therefore take advantage of the laws helping and protecting their right to divorce.

Education is another force for change in Melanesia. Many people have two world views - the cultural world view and the outside world view. It is like one man wearing two masks or having two hearts. Women who are educated find it hard to marry those who are not on their level. The same would be true with the men

They would not want to marry uneducated girls. People with these marriages tend to give up very quickly. This is another thing which the married families find hard. Women who are educated are liberated from being dependent, so they can walk away from their husbands. Women's liberation has also been misleading many educated women by encouraging them to separate from their husbands. The dependency on the husband as the one who would provide for the family has died down. Women who have education feel proud that they can earn money by working. They do not realise that joy and happiness do not come from money, but from the gift of God through his love.

Main issues for marriage

I would like now to pick up the main issues relating to marriage in the context of Melanesian nations, particularly the Solomon Islands.

First, there is the issue of brideprice. The bridegroom's tribe collect money to buy the bride for the boy. The bride is paid for because she will be part of the bridegroom's tribe, and she will bear children to increase the population of the tribe. She will feed pigs, make big gardens to bring wealth and status to the tribe. When she dies her ghost will be adopted into the ancestory ghosts. Most people also think that the brideprice is to pay for the parents' and tribes' effort in bringing up the girl and the security given to her by the people concerned. The bride then seems to possess many values in the community. But there are also other things which need to be clarified. For example, the money that is collected by the tribe has to be paid back each time a son is married. If five people have given money to help the parents of the bridegroom, in return he would have to pay back five times. This is a big debt on the bridegroom and very often creates disputes and conflicts in the tribe.

The brideprice has caused many other problems within marriage. Sometimes it is treated as a commercial matter so that the girl is being paid for as an object. This has come about when the tribe of the bride has demanded a lot of money. Worse still, there is not a fixed price within the society. Each case is treated as being at the mercy of the girl's tribe and such issues have created a lot of tension in the churches.

Churches have different views on this issue. Some churches want to eliminate and so rectify the whole thing. Others would like to have a fixed price, but none of these attempts have succeeded as far as I know. Some people have accepted these moves and others have not done so. I think the moves should be thought through within the context of changed times. We should view the values of the whole thing differently now because of the modern trends of thought. We should look at the present position and the meaning of marriage for today.

Finally, we should see clearly who in marriage should get the most happiness, joy and love. Is it the parents, the tribes and the community or is it the newly married couple? I think the newly married couple is the correct beneficiary. Today's time and its meanings and practices are different from the past. I therefore think that a new form of brideprice should be made, that is, that both parties, the tribe of the boy and the tribe of the girl, should bring equal amounts of money and give them to the couple. This would help the couple to begin a new life. I say this because the gospel meaning of marriage is based on love, sharing and justice. Such things do not happen when we put burdens on them in the form of debts they have to pay back.

Another matter we have to look into is the problem of arranged marriages, which still exist today. In many ways arranged marriages seem to be lasting longer than the self-choice marriages. In the case of arranged marriages there is a lot of self-discipline involved. The boy should not take the girl out without others accompanying her. While still in the period of waiting they should not be allowed by the tribes to be alone and thus have the freedom to be involved in deep caressing, sexual intercourse or even body contact. It seems best that the consummation of marriage and love by the sex union be achieved at the later stages, after a good deal of discipline. Enough time is allowed for preparation by the tribes, the families and the couple concerned. Because people think that marriage is for a life time and not a trial thing they are prepared to abide with these disciplines.

Jesus said, "What God has joined together let no one put apart". This is a strong saying, therefore the Christian church should take note of this saying. I am not saying that arranged marriages should be the only way. The concepts and practices can however be adopted into Christian ways of marriage preparation. It is wrong to force people to get married; it is also wrong not to give good guidance and advice to people who are wanting each other. A girl may want to marry a boy. It is the concern of the parents to guide them away from sexual intercourse before their marriage. Some sort of principles and discipline must be given to them. There should be some challenges, rather than making it a cheap thing. Marriage teaching and instruction is not properly carried out in the churches. Also the content of the courses do not meet the real issues, do not create understanding. Arranged marriages have a place in Melanesia through some sort of changes, some revitalization of thinking.

A case study on this matter should start with the parents at home. There should be some forms of teaching or advice on the matter of virginity, teaching children not to have sexual intercourse before marriage. Mary the mother of Jesus was a virgin. Premarital intercourse was a disgraceful issue in the past. The Christian churches also condemned it. Once the parents control the marriage of their children with the help of the church I think we may have something better than now.

Conclusion

The gospel message brings eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life". There must be some good things in the cultures which the gospel can transform. The truths in the old ways can be fully truth, if the truth of Christ can approve of it. The life of Christ which we should experience in our marriages should begin here and now, the joy and happiness, not problem after problem. That life is good, secure and profitable because it should continue in heaven; that is the fulfilment of it.

The Christian churches should not condemn people with marriage problems. But there should be some education about it and good preparation for it should be encouraged. Christian marriage can only be Christian if the Christians are to live the Christian life and follow Christian teaching about marriage.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY.

This is such a large issue that a series of meetings could be planned around the theme. However, one general session such as the following could be valuablc.

Step 1: The leader or another selected person should give a brief introduction, raising issues relevant to the particular country, but not giving answers. He/she should have read the article by Leslie Fugui on p .

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(a) What were the main strengths and weaknesses of the old traditions of marriage and family in your country? How does the old compare with the Christian? What was good? What needs to be discarded?

(b) What new understandings of marriage and family should be accepted in the light of the Christian gospel and modern knowledge? (Use blblical references such as Gen. 1:27, 1 Cor. 7:2-5, Mark 10:1-12)

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Traditional	Christian
Bride price Polygamy etc....	

Step 4: Reflect on new possibilities for the enrichment of marriage and family in your country. List them.

Step 5: Plan further work on specific issues such as bride price, ways of choosing a husbnad or wife; family planning, divorce, human sexuality and its creative expression, modern threats and new enrichment for marriage and family life, authority of women and men in the family etc.

Resources

Article by Leslie Fugui including book references. Publication by Gaqo.

Footnotes

* Significance of marriage in culture and Christianity

1. Aylward Shorter Christian Family Power in Africa. Printed in Kenya by Nakuru Press, 1977.

   "Divorce is not allowed for Christians and no reasons for divorce can be accepted. Even the famous verse of St. Mt. 5: 32 which seems to allow an exception is really quite clear. Moses allowed divorce but Jesus did not allow it."

   "The Bible does not, of course, speak of equality but it does paint a picture of living mutuality between husband and wife. Even St. Paul who wrote from a society donimated by man emphasizes this aspect of mutuality (eg. Eph. 5:21-23)."

2. Clifford J. Wright Preparing for Marriage. Published by the Methodist General Conference. Dept. of C.E. 47 Swanston Street, Melbourne.

   "It is only within marriage, within the context of a common life that sexual intercourse can find its full meaning and richness."

   Aylward Shorter. Christian Family Power in Africa. Printed in Kenya by Nakuru Press. 1977

   "There must be justice for both men and women in marriage. The wife must be accepted as a partner or companion and not as a servant or bearer of children."

* Marriage problems due to social changes in Melanesia

1. Aylward Shorter Christian Family Power in Africa. Printed in Kenya, Nakuru Press.

   "Divorce is increasingly growing in Africa. The churches have contributed very little in the way of helping those whose marriages are threatened by divorce. Divorce is not allowed for Christians, and no reasons for divorce can be accepted Mt. 5:32."

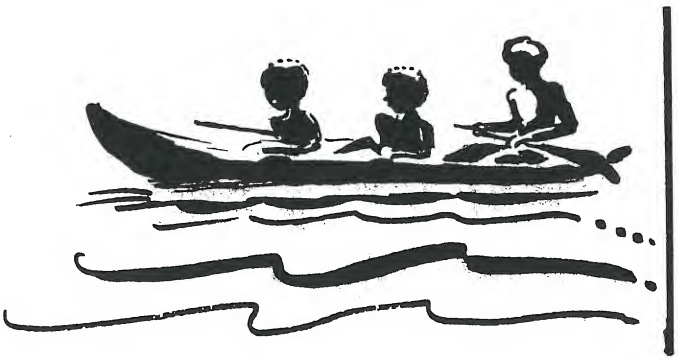
   "The gap between parents and young people is not one of age only. It is an education gap, an economic gap and a geographical gap."

2. The Church and Families The Joint Board of C.E. Melbourne Printed by Globe Press, Pty Ltd. Fitzroy.

   "Parents need and appreciate affirmation. When they are doing a good job and this helps them steer a good course."

Aylward Shorter Christian Family Power in Africa. Nakuru Press.

"Sometimes when a married man succeeds in life and takes up an important position in the city, he finds his first wife too rustic and uneducated. He therefore takes a parlour wife who is his companion in town and who acts as hostess in their urban home."



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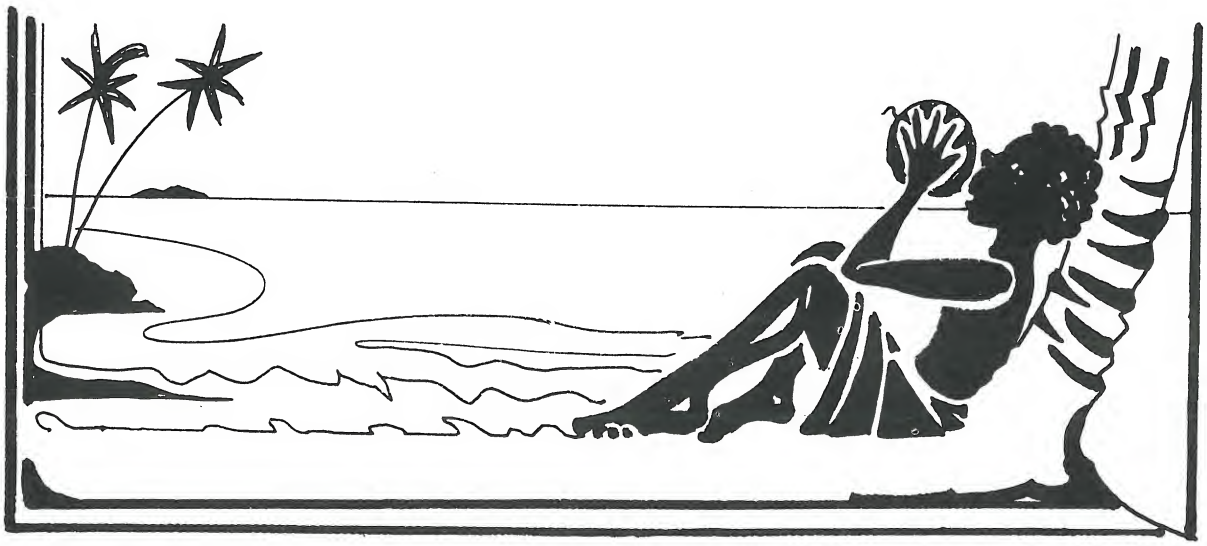

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Resources

Article by Leslie Fugui including book references.

ROLE OF TRADITIONAL PRIESTS AND CHRISTIAN MINISTERS

Reporter - Cliff Wright

The following material is based on long discussions at a culture and faith workshop at Bonriki village in Kiribati, in 1981. It raises important points about similarities and differences between the work of traditional priests and that of Christian ministers, not only in Kiribati, but in the Pacific Islands generally. Baranite Kirata, Principal of Tanginbetu Theological College, Tarawa, Kiribati assisted in the formulation of the report.*

Functions of traditional priests

Priests had a very important function in traditional Kiribati culture. They were people with a close relationship with a particular god. They received messages from the gods on behalf of the people, thus providing a connection (causeway) for the people with a particular god. In other words, they were mediators between the unseen world of spirits and the people.

The priestly role was associated with certain families, and was performed by both men and women.

Most priests worked for the good of the people, receiving messages from the spirits, offering sacrifices, praying, helping the community in practical ways, acting as reconcilers, thinkers, healers. Some were skilled in the use of evil sorcery; they were destroyers, killers.

Comparing the Christian role of ministers with that of traditional priests was deeply absorbing to workshop members. They recognised that pastors do not have a monopoly of many of the functions of Christian ministry, for the ministry of the church is shared by all members (See Acts 2:17-18, Eph. 4:1-16, 1 Cor. 12:4-30.) Nevertheless, the pastor's work is very important.

Some members were surprised to see how closely the work of the traditional priest corresponds with the Christian. This insight led to greater respect for the old, and to awareness that Christ is indeed the fulfiller of many aspects of the old culture. The following chart lists the functions of traditional priests comparing them with the functions of Christian ministers.

* A full report of the Kiribati workshop "Christ and Kiribati Culture", is available from Cliff Wright, 4 Fairy Street, Ivanhoe, Vic. 3079, Australia. A$2.50 posted.

Tasks of Traditional Priest	Tasks of the Christian Ministry Now
1. Receive messages from a particular spirit, mediator or "causeway".	1. Receive messages from God through the Holy Spirit, Mediator, but Christ the mediator, the "causeway" (Heb. Chaps. 7-9).
2. Offer sacrifices such as first fruits to god at the shrine.	2. Celebrate the Holy Communion, but Christ the "host". Gifts to God received. First fruits offering to God is biblical as well as traditional.
3. A reconciler, peacemaker between people; sometimes use singing to restore good relationships.	3. A reconciler in many aspects of peacemaking such as marriage counselling, making peace between families, etc.
4. Put magic on someone so that he/she becomes unpopular, etc.	4. Not a Christian activity. No link.
5. Heal the sick. It is an obligation to be available.	5. Heal the sick in co-operation with doctors, hospitals. Pray for sick. Encourage cleanliness, good diet, etc. Be available to the people at all times.
6. Perform magic to help fishermen with good catches, defence from sharks.	6. Pray for fisherman, as well as affirming standards of preparation to avoid dangers, etc.
7. Use magic to help people play well, win at games, gain added strength, maybe use sorcery to defeat other competitors.	7. Encourage young people to play well, pray, train and accept discipline. No sorcery. "Friendship first, competition second."
8. Foretell the future through dreams, etc.	8. Warn of the consequences of bad actions and the results of good, just actions. Should develop skill in understanding dreams.

cont ...

9.	Call whales to come on shore for eating.	9.	Not applicable - leave to God.
10.	Make magic to help win a girl's love, make the girl respond.	10.	Prepare young people for good marriage relationship through discussions, talks, example, etc.
11.	Help women to know what to do to make a good home, cook well, etc.	11.	Give help in making good homes.
12.	Make rain fall, or stop the rain.	12.	Pray for rain as well as to avoid too much.
13.	Perform sorcery causing people to be sick and maybe die.	13.	Not applicable - cause evil to die, not people.
14.	Reconcile as a mediator between people and spritis.	14.	Mediate in the name of Christ between people and God.
15.	Remove evil sorcery.	15.	Use the power of Christ to cast out evil influences in various forms.
16.	Compose new tunes and words of songs received from the spirits.	16.	Compose new songs and hymns inspired by the Holy Spirit.
17.	Invent new dances and impart the spirit of dancing to the people. Ritual washing of singers, massage.	17.	Help the work of choir masters and leaders in Christian celebrations. New inventions and inspiration are needed.
18.	Accept discipline, with a type of fasting, sitting in smoke to train performers for graceful movement.	18.	Accept discipline of prayer and maybe fasting.
19.	Observe special times at four times each month (full moon 7th day, 14th day, 21st day).	19.	Observance of special times (Sunday and Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc.) which focus attention on important aspects of the gospel.
20.	Magic performed on injured person so that they do not feel severe pain.	20.	Give concerned support, with prayer and use of medicines to reduce pain suffered by injured person.
21.	Be a person with special knowledge, insight, power.	21.	Be a person with gifts of the Spirit such as knowledge, insight, power.

Priests of music

One important and interesting feature of the work of traditional priests in Kiribati was the important place given to priests of music.

Through the priests of music new songs, with words and music, were composed, inspired by spirits. The priests observed strict disciplines, which included abstention from certain foods, and from sexual intercourse at the times when they were preparing to receive inspiration. They would go to a shrine, accompanied by people possessing special musical gifts, whose task it was to remember with complete accuracy the music and words received through the priest.

When the inspiration for a new song came, associated maybe with the swirling rhythm of smoke, the priest would sing. The others would have the task of remembering.

It was believed that when the song was remembered and sung properly, there would be an approving sign: a frigate bird would come and perch on a wooden frame around the shrine.

When a larger group of people came together to hear a new song a special ceremony was observed. The priest presided, sitting at a stone. Part of a sweet coconut was cut into small pieces. The priest prayed and then the coconut was distributed among the singers. All received a share. Pieces left after chewing were collected and burned.

(This ceremony inevitably brought to mind the Christian celebration of Holy Communion. It was affirmed that the traditional ceremony was observed prior to the coming of Christian worship to Kiribati.)

If during the singing of a new song someone in the gathering became sick, this was thought to be the fault of the priest, or of those whose task it was to remember the song. Any inaccuracy would be punished by the spirit responsible for the song.

In the traditional culture there was intense interest in the singing of songs. They were often used in competitions.

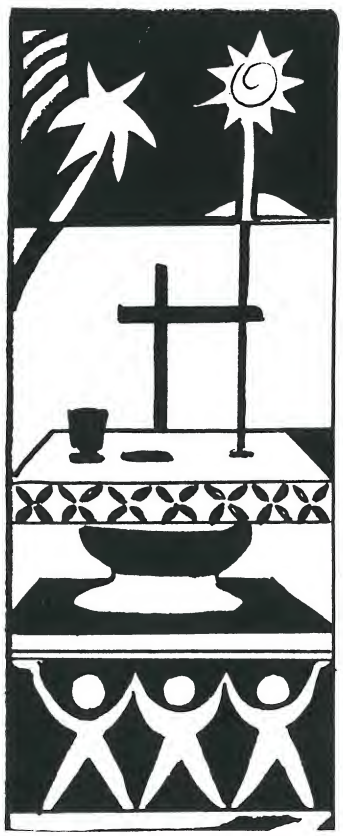
There were many different kinds of songs. For example, some love songs carried power in them, power to win a girl, who hearing the words of the song would change her mind and accept a suitor. Others would be on themes such as the building of the canoe.

It was often necessary to "dive deep" to find the meaning of a song. Some doubt was expressed by workshop members about the use of traditional music in Christian worship, even when

Christian words were composed to fit the traditional tunes. It is clear that the traditional music has a great appeal to Kiribati people. Is it something that can be "baptised" into Christian observances? This question was discussed during the workshop without reaching a clear conclusion. Members noted certain dangers because of associations with old beliefs. On the other hand, it was seen that the tunes could provide a valuable link between the traditional and Christian; and assist the development of a unique Kiribati expression of Christian faith, rich in meaning for the people. Throughout the Pacific there is a growing interest in worship in the Pacific way which means that aspects of the traditional culture, close to the inner life and being of the people, can find expression. It was recognised that much of the music brought by Christian missionaries has a deep appeal, but is it necessary to depend entirely on music from the west for Christian worship?

Students at Tangintebu Theological College, Tarawa, have written Christian words to traditional tunes, and the songs are sung and heard with great appreciation.

Of course, new tunes and words, too, are being composed by Kiribati people, expressing meanings which are alive for the present time. More are called for. But the inherited riches from the past would also provide joy and enrichment both on general occasions and in Christian worship. This issue needs further consideration by Christians in Kiribati.



SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ON TRADITIONAL PRIESTS AND CHRISTIAN MINISTERS

Preparation

Before the session or sessions ask a person or selected group to investigate the role of traditional priests in the particular culture - Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa etc. The chart in the text could help the local analysis.

Step 1: Present the role of traditional priests through a panel discussion, a lecture, or a drama. Maybe someone with an artistic gift could prepare pictures of various aspects of the work of traditional priests.

Step 2: In small groups, work on the following questions:

1. In our country, what were the tasks of traditional priests?

2. Think about the valuable aspects of the work of these priests, and how they relate to the work of Christian ministry today. What similarities and differences do you see between the work of traditional priests and Christian ministers?

3. Make a chart.

Work of Traditional Priests	Work of Christian Ministry

Step 3: Each group should report findings. After the reports, allow time for a general discussion.

Step 4: Study the following biblical passages looking for answers to the qeustion, "What do these passages suggest about the attitudes and tasks of Christian ministers?"

John 13:1-17
Ephesians 4:1-16

Step 5: Discuss and place ways in which the work of ministers can be supported and improved.

Resources

Article Cliff Wright. Local people who know old culture. Biblical references.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

An Order of Service planned in Vanuatu
Using Coconut and other Symbolism

Preamble

In many countries the coconut palm is highly valued for its significant contribution to the needs of the community. Even to own one tree increases a person's status.

The coconut palm has many uses. The wood from the trunk is used for posts, building timber, and firewood, while the sap from the trunk is used for medicinal purposes. When green the leaves are used for roofing and walls, for weaving baskets, and to make grass skirts to be worn during cultural dances; the dried leaves are used for weaving fishing nets, for torchlights, and for fires.

The coconut fruit, that is the nut, is very important as it is used as a source of both food and income. The flesh (or meat) can be made into a variety of dishes, or made into copra for sale so that incomes are boosted along with living standards. Even the husk is used as raw material for the making of rope or string.

The people love, respect and value the coconut as one of the most valuable trees that God has provided because of its comprehensive usefulness in providing the needs of daily life.

The dependence of the community on this tree enables the coconut to be used to symbolise the Christian's dependence on Christ.

At a workshop in Vanuatu a small group was appointed to plan the final act of worship. Here is a description of the service.

People dressed in a traditional way. Singing, playing guitars and traditional instruments, they went from house to house, gathering the people as they went. At the last house all went inside and the singing continued. Everyone then moved to the hall, which was lit with hurricane lamps, and sat on mats. A custom song was sung, and a scene showing the arrival of the first missionary into a village was acted.

Members shared their thoughts and feelings about the workshop, the learning which had taken place, and the depth of the koinonia (fellowship).

A group sang "Bread in the Wilderness", a hymn used frequently during the workshop meetings.

Then came the celebration of Holy Communion, led by the Rev. Neal Whimp, using the following dramatic liturgy.

During the reading bring in growing coconut and place in central position

ISAIAH 53: 1,2.

> "Who would have believed what we now report?
> Who could have seen the Lord's hand in this?
> It was the will of the Lord that his servant should grow
> like a young plant taking root in the ground.
> He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of him.
> There was nothing about him that would draw us to him."

During the reading tear off outer husk of coconut slowly (unseen but heard)

ISAIAH 53: 3,4.

> "We despised him and rejected him. He endured suffering
> and pain... No one would even look at him. But he
> endured the suffering that should have been ours.
> All the time we thought that his punishment was from
> God."

Roll in husked coconut with crosses drawn on it

ISAIAH 53: 4,7-9.

> "But he endured the suffering that should have been ours,
> the pain that we should have borne. And the while we
> thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God.
> He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;
> he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered,
> like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word.
> He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die,
> and no one cared about his fate. He was put to death
> for the sins of our people. He was placed in a grave
> with evil men, he was buried with the rich, even though
> he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie."

Roll the husked coconut around the floor, kicking and talking nogud at it Think silently.... When have I treated someone else like that? Then share any thoughts.

ISAIAH 53: 5a.

> "But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because
> of the evil we did."

Break the coconut with a bushknife and let the water run into a bowl

ISAIAH 53:6.

"All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved."

Prayer of Confession (three short prayers)

ISAIAH 53:12. (All read together)

"He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of evil men. He took the place of many sinners and prayed that they might be forgiven."

Shell out the coconut

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-25.

(Words of the Institution of the Lord's Supper)

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Lord's Prayer

Share out coconut meat:

Each break off a piece and hold until all have one.
All eat together.

"We are like those who broke his body, but as we broke him, he fed us."

"Take and eat, this is my body which is for you."

ISAIAH 55:1.

"The Lord says, Come everyone who is thirsty - here is water. Come! It will cost you nothing. This cup is the new covenant sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, remember me!

Each dip cup into the bowl, return to place, and drink prayerfully.

ISAIAH 55:3.

"Listen now, my people, and come to me; come to me and you will have life. I will make a lasting covenant with you, and give you the blessings I promised to David."

Prayer of thanksgiving. (Two or three lead)

Quiet sharing for a few moments...

"Tonight this Communion Service has meant to me...."

ISAIAH 55:6-11.

"Turn to the Lord and pray to him now that he is near.
Let the wicked leave their way of life and change
their way of thinking. Let them turn to the Lord our God.
He is merciful and quick to forgive.
My thoughts, says the Lord, are not like yours, and
my ways are different from yours. My word is like the...
rain that comes down from the sky to water the earth.
They make the crops grow... So also will be the word
that I speak - it will not fail to do what I plan for it;
it will do everything that I send it to do."

Hymn.

ISAIAH 55:12,13

Benediction

You will leave Aulua with joy; you will be led from this place in peace. The oceans and the islands will burst into singing, and the trees will shout for joy. Coconuts and cacoa will grow where there is mile a minute vine; and hibiscus will flower in the place of nangalat. This will be a sign that will last forever, a reminder of what the Lord has done.
May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be your peace strength and guide.

All link arms and sing together "Shalom".

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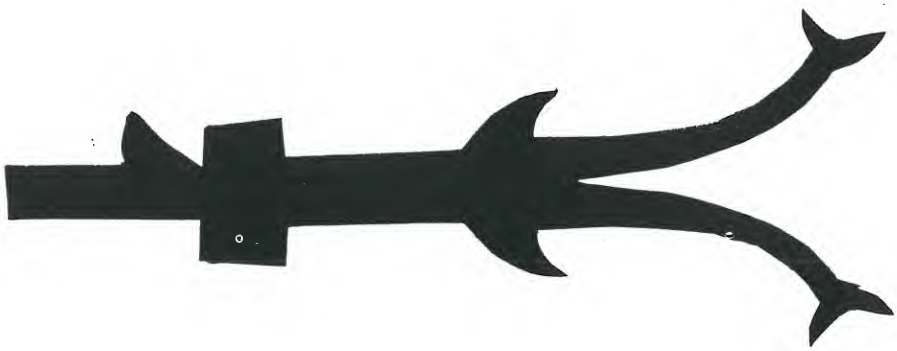

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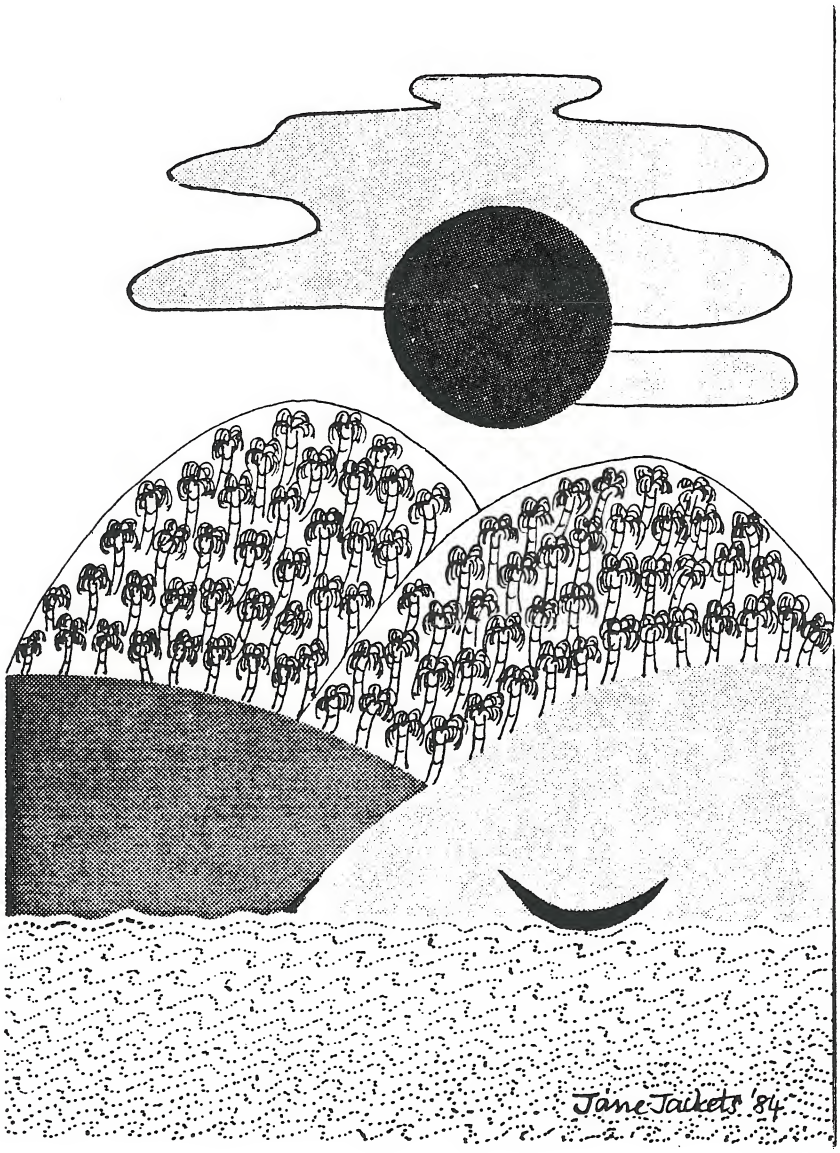

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